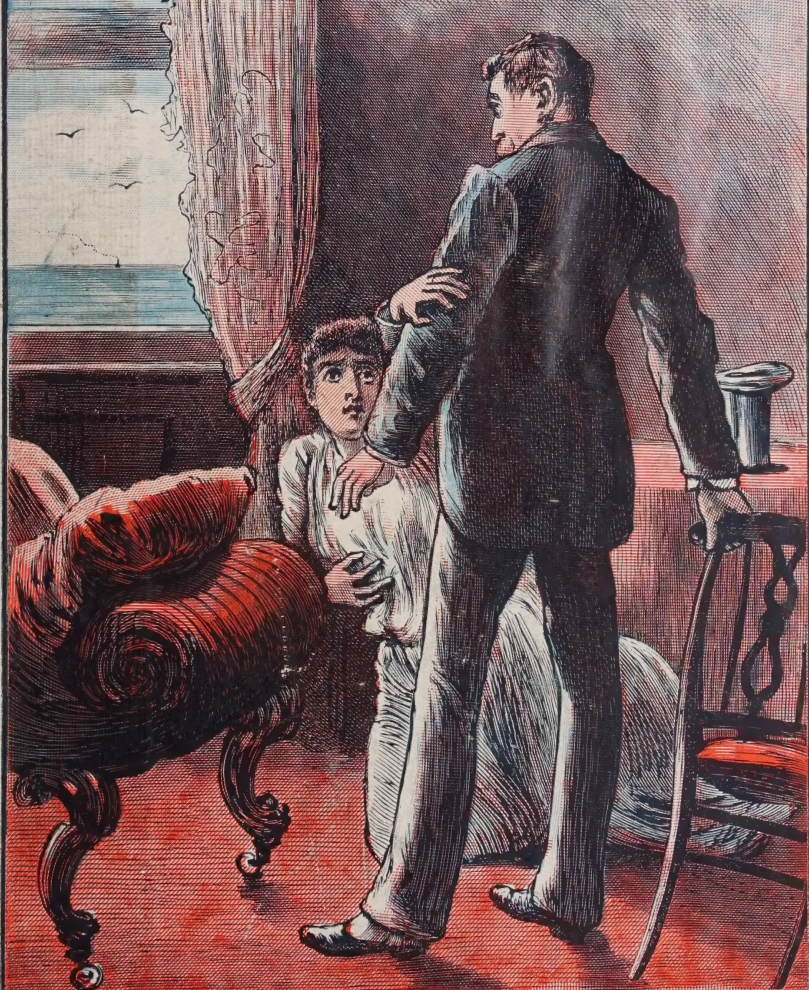


IN THE GRIP OF THE LAW

By Dick Donovan



Chatto & Windus, Piccadilly.

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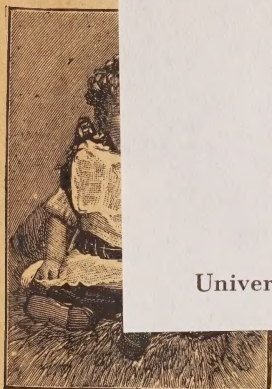
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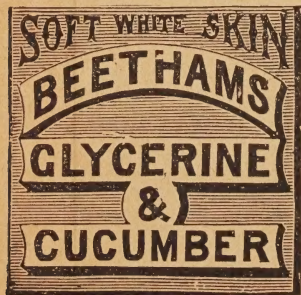
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IN THE GRIP OF THE LAW

BY

DICK DONOVAN

AUTHOR OF "THE MAN-HUNTER," "WHO POISONED HETTY DUNCAN?" ETC.



London

CHATTO & WINDUS, PICCADILLY

1892


IN THE GRIP OF
THE LAW

THE HISTORY OF
THE



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IN THE GRIP OF THE LAW.

A HOARY SINNER.

ONE morning during my Glasgow experiences I received orders to inquire into a case of robbery of a somewhat peculiar nature. A man by the name of James M'Neil was accused of stealing the sum of sixty pounds and a gold watch from his master, Mr. Richard Beeston, who farmed a small estate a few miles to the south of Glasgow. At first it seemed to me to be simply an ordinary and vulgar case of theft; but later on I was to learn that it was something more than this.

I found that Mr. Beeston was a man of fully sixty years of age, of a somewhat venerable appearance, owing to his snow-white hair and beard. He was a fine, well-preserved looking man, with a fresh complexion, but with a general expression of face that was by no means calculated to inspire one with confidence. The mouth was large, the upper jaw heavy and square, while the eyes were small and restless. I mention these little details because they struck me immediately I saw him; and I have always maintained that a man's character is to a large extent unmistakably revealed by his face. The facts of the case I was called upon to investigate were these, as communicated to me by Mr. Beeston himself. In his employ he had a man named

James M'Neil, who acted in the double capacity of cowherd and gardener. M'Neil was about thirty-three or -four years of age, and was married to a young woman nearly fourteen years his junior. He, with his wife, occupied a small cottage about half a mile from Beeston's farm, and the wife taught in the village school.

According to Beeston's story, he had the previous day drawn from the bank the sum of seventy pounds. Ten pounds of this amount he had used, and the other sixty he placed in a cash-box in his bedroom, as the money was required in the course of the week for the wages of his servants and for some other small matters. On that very morning, however, having occasion to open the cash-box, he was startled to find that the sixty pounds had disappeared; and a gold watch—a family heirloom, but of no great value—which he had left hanging on a little stand on the top of a chest of drawers, had also been carried off. Now, it was pretty clear, if Beeston's story was correct, that a burglary had not been committed, that is, the house had not been broken into, and that the thief knew of the money being there. M'Neil had this knowledge, for, apart from looking after the cows and managing the small garden, he helped his employer with his books; and the day following that on which the money was withdrawn from the bank, being the wage-settling day, M'Neil was informed by his master that the money was in the house.

When Mr. Beeston had told me so much I said, "On the first blush it would seem that you have some grounds for suspecting M'Neil, but something more than that is needed to justify you in placing the man under arrest. Have you ever had occasion to suspect his honesty before?"

"Yes," answered Beeston, a little sharply.

“Why, then, did you retain him in your service?”

“For a very good reason. I thought I might be mistaken, and I was willing to give him the benefit of the doubt, as he was a useful servant to me.”

“Have you accused him now of having stolen this money and the watch?”

“Yes.”

“And what was his answer?”

“Why, the answer given by every thief when he is accused—he protested his innocence.”

“What are the man’s antecedents?”

“I don’t know them.”

“How long has he been with you?”

“Just two years.”

“How did you get him?”

“Through an advertisement. He had been employed on a farm in Wales.”

“Why did he leave?”

“Because—according to his own account—he wanted to better himself, and also because he wished to return to his native country, Scotland.”

“Was he married then?”

“Yes, he had just been married. He had married a young Welsh woman, who had kept a school for young children in the village where he had been in service.”

“Did you get a good character with him?”

“I did. I may at once say, he was strongly recommended. The people asserted that they were sorry to part with him.”

“Well, it will be a serious thing,” I remarked, “if you give him into custody and he should be proved innocent. He would be entitled to bring an action against you for false imprisonment, and it might go hard against you.”

"Oh, I am aware of that!" exclaimed Beeston, with an acerbity that quite astonished me. "But I'm quite prepared to risk it, and will take all the consequences if I am wrong. All you've got to do is to do your duty. I know what I am about."

I looked at the man in surprise as he thus expressed himself. It seemed to me unmistakable that he nourished some rankling bitterness against his servant, and was acting, as I thought, precipitately, and under the impulsion of a strong prejudice.

"Well, it is to be hoped that you do know what you are about," I answered him drily. "As far as I am concerned, I shall most certainly endeavour to do my duty to the best of my ability. The onus of responsibility for a mistake rests with you if you charge this man and he should establish his innocence."

"I've already told you I'm aware of that, and I will take all the risk. In my own mind, I haven't a doubt he is the thief. I know him, and you don't. Nor is he the first fellow who, having been honest for a number of years, suddenly becomes dishonest. The whole fact of the matter is this, he has got into some monetary difficulty; and not very long ago he asked me to lend him fifty pounds, which I declined to do. Now, if you put two and two together, you can work out a sum for yourself. Firstly, he is in difficulties; secondly, he tries to get a loan from me; and thirdly, being aware that I had sixty pounds in my room, and having access to the room, he could not resist the temptation of helping himself from my funds."

"I confess," I returned, "that you make out a *primá facie* case. Was the money that has been taken in notes or gold?"

“It was all in one-pound notes, for the convenience of paying the wages.”

Such was the information supplied to me by Mr. Beeston, and I was much struck by the strong feeling he displayed against the suspected man. It will perhaps be said that, under the circumstances, it was only natural he should feel strongly. But what I wish to convey, and what impressed itself upon me, was that some deeper prejudice stirred him than that begotten by the loss of his money. As he persisted in charging M'Neil with the robbery, I was left with no alternative but to effect the arrest of the suspected man. I asked him where I should find M'Neil, and he answered—

“I don't know ; he took himself off in high dudgeon a little while ago when I told him I suspected him of being the thief, and he threatened me with all sorts of things. I expect, however, he won't be far away. If he is not in his house he will be in the neighbourhood.”

Acting on this, I proceeded to M'Neil's residence—a comfortable little cottage of four rooms standing in a pretty garden that was quite a picture with flowers. He was not in, and a neighbour told me that he had gone down to the school to fetch his wife. So I proceeded towards the school, which was nearly three-quarters of a mile away, but had not gone very far before I met a young man and woman, and, from the man's excited state, I guessed he was the person I wanted. So, stopping him, I asked if he was M'Neil.

“Yes, I am,” he exclaimed.

“Then it's my duty to arrest you,” I said, “on a charge preferred against you by Mr. Beeston of having robbed him of sixty pounds and a gold watch.”

He was a healthy, well-built looking man, with somewhat irregular features. His was not a very

characteristic face; that is, it suggested nothing very original. It was commonplace enough, and while it did not indicate anything that could be construed into mental dulness, it spoke of no out-of-the-way intelligence. On the other hand, it seemed to be free from all signs of a cunning or evil disposition. Indeed, if I had been asked to draw an estimate of the man's character from his face, I should have pronounced him a good-tempered, honest, easy-going fellow, not clever enough to be a cheat, and not wise enough to be a knave.

Turning to his wife, she was a striking contrast. She attracted attention at once. She was slightly taller than he, and whereas he had fair hair with a tendency to curl, and deep-set blue eyes, her hair was dark almost to blackness, and her eyes were large, languid, and mesmeric. Let the word mesmeric be taken in this connection as meaning fascinating. In short, she was a most fascinating young woman, with a certain sensuousness of expression such as one often sees in the faces of Italian and Spanish women.

M'Neil was pale when I met him, but my announcement caused him to turn still paler, and with subdued passion he exclaimed—

“Mr. Beeston is a scoundrel and a liar! But please to come to my house. I am not going to discuss this matter on the public highway.”

Mrs. M'Neil seemed upset, but not so much as one might have expected, and she backed up her husband's request by remarking—

“Oh yes; pray don't make a scene here.”

“I have no wish to do that,” I said, “but your husband must consider himself in my custody.”

“That's all right,” he answered, with a sigh of

despair, "but the old villain who so unjustly accuses me shall be made to pay dearly for it. My day will come."

I made no reply to this, and we walked towards the house. When we reached it he opened the door with a latch-key, and, entering the little parlour, threw himself into a chair, and, covering his face with his hands, he groaned. But in a few moments he struck the table with his clenched fist, and broke out into passionate invective against Beeston, whom he denounced as an unmitigated scoundrel.

"This charge is infamous!" he cried. "I never touched his money. I would not have robbed him of a pin, much less of sixty pounds."

"I don't believe my husband is guilty," chimed in Mrs. M'Neil, as she applied her handkerchief to her eyes. But I was rather struck by the want of true sympathy in her tone and manner. It occurred to me that she was rather forcing herself to act a part that was not altogether in accord with her true feelings.

"Well, there is one thing, Ellen," he said, with extraordinary bitterness, "whether I am guilty or not, you will very likely be rid of me now for a time, and that will please you."

"Oh, James, how can you say so!" she exclaimed, with energy. "You know that is false."

"It isn't false. Have you not several times expressed a wish that I was dead?"

"Yes; when you have angered me beyond control by your unjustified jealousy."

This little dialogue let in a side-light on the domestic life of this ill-matched couple. I say ill-matched, because it needed no very deep insight into human nature to understand at once that she was not the wife for him. He seemed nothing more than what he was—

a degree or two removed above a labouring man. But there were ambition and a love of pleasure and excitement written in her face, and it would have required a lot of faith to believe that she was contented with the humble cottage and the humdrum existence she must necessarily lead with her husband; in short, she wasn't humble enough for him.

As I was anxious to put an end to the painful scene, I said—

“Come, I cannot delay any longer. You must accompany me into Glasgow.”

“Yes,” he exclaimed, as he sprang to his feet, “I will go! But give me time to put some of my property away, and to write a few lines to my father, who lives in Paisley.”

I told him I had no objection to his doing that, so long as he did not go out of my sight—a condition that he assented to. But in a few minutes Mr. Beeston entered, and exclaimed triumphantly—

“So you have got the scoundrel!”

On hearing this M'Neil turned round, his face livid with passion, and shaking his fist at Beeston, he hissed fiercely—

“You infernal villain, you know that this is a plot to ruin me! But it shall cost you dear, as sure as God's in heaven!”

“What do I want to ruin you for?” growled Beeston.

“That is a matter best known to yourself, and perhaps one other person,” answered M'Neil, and as he spoke he fixed his eyes on his wife, which seemed to cause her some confusion.

“What do you mean?” she asked warmly. “Do you insinuate that there is anything between me and Mr. Beeston?”

"I insinuate nothing at present," returned M'Neil.

"Oh, he's bad enough for anything," put in Beeston. "Not satisfied with robbing me, he now tries to asperse your character."

Here Mrs. M'Neil burst into weeping, and, throwing herself on to the sofa, she completely hid her face with her handkerchief.

"I tell you again, you are a liar and a villain!" hissed M'Neil.

"Hard names break no bones," answered Beeston. "But let me say, it would become one in your position better if you were more respectful. You've robbed me, and you know it; and, instead of abusing me, you should go down on your knees and ask my pardon."

M'Neil drew himself up, and, raising his hand on high, he exclaimed with powerful emphasis—"I have not robbed you," and then, as if to give greater effect to his denial, he repeated with even stronger emphasis, if that were possible, "I say I have not robbed you!"

As an unbiassed and unprejudiced witness of this dramatic scene, I confess to having been much impressed by M'Neil's seeming earnestness. He neither spoke nor acted like a man who was labouring under a consciousness of guilt. If he were guilty, I thought, he had the remarkable power, not usual with a man of ordinary mental capacity, of being able to act the part of injured innocence to perfection.

"Now, look here," said Beeston; "return my money to me, and I won't prosecute you."

"I tell you I know nothing about your money; I never took it. I have never seen a penny of it," cried M'Neil, with an outburst of fury that was in strange contrast to his previous self-possessed and dignified manner.

As I wished to put an end to the controversy, I told him to make haste and get his letter written and then come with me. He said that he was too upset to write the letter then, and that he would go at once.

"Good-bye, Ellen," he said to his wife, somewhat coldly; "I don't suppose you are very sorry at parting from me."

She sprang up excitedly, and, throwing her arms round his neck, wept and sobbed, and between her sobs she exclaimed—

"Oh, Jim, why do you talk to me like that? You know perfectly well you are doing me a wrong."

He kissed her, and as he unwound her arms from his neck, and pushed her gently away, he said—

"Let me give you a word of advice. Beware of that man Beeston. He means you no good."

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself," retorted Beeston. "I have been a friend to you both, and you have abused my friendship and the confidence I have reposed in you by robbing me."

"As often as you tell me I've robbed you, as often will I tell you you are a liar," answered M'Neil; "and now, as this is my house, I command you to leave it."

"You don't suppose I want to stay here, do you?" and with that Beeston walked out of the place, and went on to the road; and then turning to me M'Neil said—

"Let us go; I shall be glad to get this painful scene over. But remember my words, you are taking an innocent man." He glanced at his wife, who stood weeping, with her handkerchief to her face, but she made no signs of wishing to embrace him again. He

turned from her and left the house, and I noticed that tears had gathered in his eyes.

Mr. Beeston was standing by the gate, and I told him he would have to accompany me to the station to record the charge. He seemed rather surprised at that, but said that if I would wait he would get his horse and trap, and we could drive in. To this plan, however, M'Neil raised a protesting voice, and I told Beeston he had better follow, and we would go on. So he set off to his farm, and my prisoner and I walked into the city. He was silent the whole way, and I asked no questions except one, which was suggested by what had passed in the cottage. The question was this—

“James M'Neil, have you anything like a shadow of justification for being jealous of your wife?”

“Yes,” he answered, “I have. I was a fool to marry her. She is too young for me. She ought to have had a man with plenty of money, and who was fond of gadding about.”

I made no further remark, and he was silent for the rest of the way, until, just as we reached the Central Station, he suddenly stopped, and in a husky voice, and with eyes dimmed with tears, he said—

“Mr. Donovan, this charge will perhaps blast my life for ever, but I hope I may die to-night if I am not absolutely and perfectly innocent.”

“I trust that may be proved,” I answered. “But I'm afraid the magistrates will want something more than your bare assertion before they will acquit you of the charge.”

“And before they can convict me they will want evidence,” he said; “and old Beeston will be floored, for he cannot bring a scrap of evidence to prove that I took the money.”

“Except circumstantial evidence,” I remarked; “and more than half the convictions that take place are based upon circumstantial evidence only.”

This answer seemed to depress him and make him gloomy again, so we passed into the station, and in about ten minutes Mr. Beeston drove up. The charge was duly recorded, and M’Neil was taken to the cells, but before he was locked up he was searched, though nothing of an incriminating character was found upon him.

It now devolved upon me to get evidence to convict him if he was guilty, and the main thing was to endeavour to find out what had become of the money. Firstly, I satisfied myself that Beeston really had drawn the money from the bank and taken it to his house. In fact, M’Neil voluntarily admitted that he was aware the money was in Beeston’s bedroom. Up to the time of my leaving the prisoner in the station I will candidly state I was somewhat predisposed in his favour. That is, I inclined to the belief that he was either the victim of an error or a plot. As I pursued my investigations, however, certain little incidents somewhat swerved me the other way. For instance, I found that he had free access to the bedroom, and two of the servants in the house declared that they saw him coming downstairs on the morning that the money was missed. Then again, he was in some monetary difficulties. He had lent his father—who kept a grocer’s shop in Paisley—several sums of money, which the old man had been unable to return, and this was the cause which had led James to ask Beeston for a loan of fifty pounds.

These circumstances put together were certainly unfavourable to the accused man, though in themselves

they were not sufficient to convict him. My next step was to search his house, and concealed in a small drawer in a writing-desk in his little parlour were the missing notes. This discovery certainly seemed to be a damning fact against the prisoner, and when Beeston heard of it he displayed, as it seemed to me, a most unseemly delight.

“There,” he cried, “that proves me right, doesn’t it? I wonder what the vagabond will have to say to that!”

The finding of the money in the house prostrated Mrs. M’Neil with grief, and she declared that she could never have believed her husband would have so basely deceived her. Somehow or other, her sorrow and indignation appeared to me to lack sincerity, and a few questions I put to her tended to confirm this impression, at any rate so far as her sorrow went. She struck me as being a disappointed young woman. Her husband had fallen far short of her ideal, and inferentially I decided that she thought she had made a mistake in marrying a man in his station of life. She was much better educated than he was; she was good-looking, and was fully conscious of it, and no doubt she had often thought to herself that, if she had played her cards well, she might have made a much better match. She certainly did not spare her invectives in referring to the discovery of the stolen money. She declared that her husband had disgraced her, and that she would never again be able to hold up her head, and that the only thing left for her to do now was to go back to her native village in Wales.

Of course I made inquiries into both her and her husband’s antecedents. As far as he was concerned, I could hear nothing but good. His former employer in Wales spoke of him in the very highest terms of

praise, and every one who knew him gave him the best of characters. His wife, who had been a Miss Jones, was said to have been a great flirt, and had jilted half the young fellows in the place. I did not attach any great importance to that, as most good-looking girls in her position in life have the same things said about them.

So far, then, the only tangible piece of evidence I had got was the finding of the notes in M'Neil's desk. It struck me as a very stupid act for him to place them in such a place, where they could not fail to be discovered if a search was made. But I inferred that he had put them there in a hurry, and no doubt thought that he would get an opportunity to remove them before there could be any search. On the other hand, I also remembered that after Beeston had accused him of the robbery he left in high indignation. Now, it must surely have struck him that if the matter was reported to the police, as Beeston told him it would be, a search would be made in his house; why, then, did he hide the notes in such a conspicuous place? I was not unmindful, of course, that criminals do the most stupid things at times, and many a man has been convicted through some thoughtless act of carelessness, when, had it been avoided, conviction would have been almost impossible. Nevertheless, I found food for reflection in this incident, and I pondered much upon it, and reviewed and reviewed again all the circumstances of the case, weighing and analysing every minute incident, and recalling M'Neil's solemn assertions of innocence, until I found myself tending towards the opinion that he was innocent. But then came the question—if he was innocent, how was it the notes were in his house? Did his wife place them there?

The reader will see at once that it would not have done for me to suggest this theory, unless I had been in a position to support it with something like circumstantial evidence. M'Neil was in prison, and he could not be kept there indefinitely until I proved or disproved my theory, so, for the time being, I kept my thoughts to myself, and in due course the prisoner was put on trial. Mr. Beeston proved a very bitter witness, and he manifested the greatest anxiety to secure the conviction of the accused. As far as I was concerned, I stated the barest facts as I had gathered them, but I laid special stress on the excellent character I had everywhere received about M'Neil. He was very ably defended, for his friends and relatives, who were all highly respectable, found the money to secure the services of Mr. Archibald Ross, the well-known pleader, who died only three or four years ago. In spite of all Mr. Ross's efforts, however, and a powerful and brilliant speech in the prisoner's behalf, the verdict was one of guilty, as the fact of the notes being found in the desk weighed heavily with the jury, and they really could not return any other verdict. Having regard, however, to M'Neil's good character, and to the money being recovered intact, the sentence was the comparatively light one of twelve months' imprisonment. Nevertheless, when the prisoner heard it, he seemed utterly overwhelmed, and, in a voice broken with grief, declared with impressive solemnity, in the sight of heaven, that he was innocent; and that either his wife or Beeston himself had placed the notes where they were found. Of course this had no effect so far as altering his sentence went. But it had an effect on me, and gave shape to a vague and shadowy idea that for days had been haunting me, and

which I now determined, entirely on my own responsibility, to follow up.

The motive which actuated me was a humble striving to get at the truth, and that argues, of course, that I was not satisfied that the truth had been revealed. If I were to attempt to give a sound reason for the feeling I had that M'Neil was innocent, I should occupy more space than is necessary. Suffice it to say that the prisoner conveyed to me an impression of his guiltlessness which it was impossible for me to shake off, and it was equally impossible for me to remain inactive while that impression lasted.

My first step was to obtain an interview with the prisoner immediately after his conviction. I had no difficulty in doing this, on the ground that I had reasons to suppose a second person had been concerned in the robbery, and I wished to get some particulars from the prisoner which would aid me in my investigations. I found the poor fellow terribly dejected. The sense of disgrace which his imprisonment produced appeared to have crushed him. But he told me that he would never rest night nor day until he had cleared his good name.

Almost the first question I asked him was whether he wished to see his wife. The question, however, threw him into a rage, and, with a fierceness I did not deem him capable of, he answered—

“No, I don't !”

“Why ?” I asked.

“Because I believe she has played a double part, and has sold me. She is beautiful, but a devil, and I am convinced now that truth is not in her. I can recall many things which did not strike me as significant at the time, but which now, viewed from my prison cell,

have a terrible meaning. I would stake my soul on it that she has deceived me."

He spoke with remarkable energy, and almost like one who was under the influence of some inspiration.

"But you do not regard it as possible that she could have stolen the notes?"

"No; certainly not."

"In what way, then, has she deceived you?"

For some little time he seemed indisposed to formulate a direct charge against her. It was obvious he was struggling with himself, and a lingering love for her endeavoured to gain mastery over a belief in her wickedness. At last he spoke—

"She has leagued herself with Beeston to ruin and blast me."

"Can you believe that possible?" I remarked; not that I believed it impossible, but I wished to get at his reasons for the belief.

"Possible!" he echoed, with an awfully bitter, cynical laugh. "What is not possible in this world when a designing man and a weak woman enter into a conspiracy?"

"Then you think that Beeston and your wife have really conspired against you?"

"Yes, undoubtedly I do."

"This is a very serious accusation, you know," I replied.

"Of course it is, but I am as innocent as a new-born babe of this robbery for which I am suffering, and so I ask myself how the notes came to be in my house if my wife did not put them there."

"But that assumes that she stole them."

"No, it doesn't."

"How, then, did she get them?"

"Beeston gave them to her."

"With the avowed intention of getting you convicted?"

"Yes."

He had now clothed with words the thoughts that had haunted me for days; and though to suppose that this thing was true was to attribute an act of monstrous wickedness to Beeston and Mrs. M'Neil, I knew only too well that it sank into insignificance when compared with some cases I had had to do with and had heard of. Truly deplorable as it is to have to make the assertion, it is indubitable that there is nothing infamous and wicked that human nature is not capable of. As I did not wish to raise the poor fellow's hopes unjustifiably, I merely remarked—

"Well, the charge against your wife is a most dreadful one, and unless it can be substantiated you libel her in a very cruel and cowardly manner. However, I will make some inquiries to see if there is anything to warrant a searching investigation."

He sprang forward and seized my hand, wringing it with the firm grip of nervous excitement, and he exclaimed—

"God bless you and aid you! Much as I might wish to screen my wife, it is a terrible thing for me to have to languish in a felon's cell, and to go forth into the world with the brand of the jail-bird indelibly imprinted upon me. I would rather die, infinitely rather die; and, indeed, I think death would be the best thing that could happen to me now."

"You must not despond," I answered; "even a guilty person should live to repent."

"True, true," he muttered; "and an innocent one

wrongfully accused should live to clear the foul aspersion from his good name."

When I left him I was more than ever impressed in his favour, and my resolve to get the truth out was strengthened. I was not able to do anything, however, for nearly a month, as other important matters engaged my attention. I found at the end of that time that Mrs. M'Neil had resigned her position in the school, and, having stored her furniture and belongings in a warehouse in Glasgow, had gone off somewhere, but no one seemed to know whither. I did not attach undue significance to this incident, for after all it was only natural that, her husband having been convicted of a crime, she should be anxious to leave the neighbourhood. But the significance was greatly increased when I learned a day or two later that Mr. Beeston was also absent from his home, and nobody about his premises would or could give me knowledge of his whereabouts.

It was generally understood that he was a bachelor, and next to nothing seemed to be known about his relatives or antecedents. He had only been on the farm about seven years, and he had gone to the neighbourhood as an utter stranger. Inquiries in the proper quarter, however, enabled me to find out that he had formerly occupied a small farm in the north of Ireland, not far from Belfast, and so I made it my business to cross the Irish Channel in quest of further information.

In the neighbourhood where he had previously lived he did not bear a good character, and I was told that desperate quarrels took place between him and his wife. The mention of his wife was a revelation, because where he was then living he was understood to be unmarried. The cause of quarrel was said to be jealousy on the part

of the wife. Not an ungrounded jealousy by any means, according to the reports. But I was referred to his wife as the best source of accurate information, and her address was Belfast. It was not very definite, Belfast being a large town; but, by the exercise of some perseverance, I succeeded in finding her.

She was well advanced in years. I judged her to be older than he was, and this proved to be correct. She was a native of Ireland, and had two grown-up sons by a former husband. One of them was an engineer in a Belfast firm, and the other was in Australia.

She spoke of Beeston with a bitterness that could only have been engendered by positive hatred.

"How long have you been separated from him?" I asked.

"Nine years."

"How was it you could not agree?"

"Because he was a deceitful, treacherous rascal, and utterly neglected me for the sake of other women."

"I suppose you have undoubted reasons for that statement?"

"Reasons!—I should think I had. Why, the scandals in which he was mixed up were simply disgraceful. For years I led a cat-and-dog life, until I could stand it no longer, and was compelled to get a situation."

"Have you seen him since?"

"No, and don't want to. He is a villain."

Before leaving the lady I put this question—

"Should you say, speaking with a conscientious regard for accuracy, that your husband would be capable of falsely accusing a person of robbery?"

"If there is a woman in the case, he is capable of anything under the sun," she answered.

I felt now that I was in a better position to tackle Mr. Beeston, and I returned to Glasgow. I found that he had also come back, but for obvious reasons I did not go near him. Let it be remembered that I was acting in an unofficial position, and however bad he might have been in his domestic affairs, that was no justification for accusing him of falsely imprisoning M'Neil, who had been convicted by a jury on what was to them the most satisfactory evidence. Under these circumstances, I could not be indifferent to the difficulties that faced me. It would be necessary to get absolute proof of M'Neil's innocence, and that could only be done by obtaining no less absolute proof that Mrs. M'Neil and Beeston had conspired against him. Unless there had been a conspiracy, it was not easy to understand how the notes came to be in M'Neil's desk, if it was assumed that he himself did not place them there. I could get no information as to what had become of Mrs. M'Neil, and it was very clear that she had not only acted with considerable artfulness, but for some strong reason she had kept her movements so secret that even people who claimed a certain amount of intimacy with her knew nothing of her whereabouts. It was pretty certain that she had an object for this mystery other than a mere desire to sever all her connections on account of the disgrace her husband's imprisonment brought upon her. Otherwise it was reasonable to suppose she would have let some of her acquaintances know where she was going to.

Quietly and steadily pursuing my investigations, I ascertained that about three years before this Beeston had got into difficulties with a young clerk and his wife who resided in Glasgow. The clerk had accused Beeston of paying too much attention to his wife, and

there was a row, which ended in Beeston thrashing the clerk severely. The matter was only kept out of the Courts by the payment on Beeston's part of a good round sum to soothe the injured husband's feelings.

So far, then, the man I was now so interested in had anything but a clean record, and there could be no doubt he was a very crafty and deceitful man. He was not particularly liked by his servants, as he bore the character of being a hard taskmaster; and I heard from three or four different tradesmen that he was considered a very ticklish customer to deal with, and would take advantage of any one if he got the opportunity. Perhaps it was only in keeping with the character of such a man that he should be given to outward demonstration of a strong regard for spiritual things. He was a constant attendant at church, and professed to take a deep interest in the Sunday-school attached to the church he went to. But my inquiries brought to light another little unpleasant incident in connection with his career which served to make the record against him still heavier.

It appears that about two years after he had gone to the farm his name became unpleasantly associated with a young lady who taught in the Sunday-school. He was almost old enough to be her grandfather, but that fact did not prevent him from almost blasting her reputation. She was sent away, and two years later she married. For her sake the matter was hushed up as much as possible, and he, putting a bold face on, seemed to be indifferent to the harsh things that were said about him.

It will thus be seen that Mr. Beeston's reputation was pretty sullied, and the bent of his mind being obviously vicious, he was not likely to stick at trifles in

carrying out any design he had determined on. Notwithstanding all this, and though my faith in M'Neil's innocence had greatly strengthened, I was still confronted with the difficulty of proving his innocence. To do that it was imperative that I should obtain such irrefragable evidence against Beeston that it would be admissible in law. He was a scoundrel; that was clear. In fact, the title I have chosen for this sketch was suggested to me by a lady of whom I made some inquiries, and who, in a moment of wrath and indignation, denounced him as "a hoary-headed old sinner." But still, what was wanted was such proof as would serve to get him convicted of "wicked and corrupt perjury." However, I did not give up hope, and, notwithstanding many other pressing duties, I managed to devote some time to Mr. Beeston.

One evening I happened to be at St. Enoch's Railway Station a little while before the South-going mail train was timed to start. I was on the lookout for a gentleman who was very much wanted for forgery, and I had some reason to suppose that he might go away by that particular train; but he did not put in an appearance, though another person in whom I was interested did, and that person was none other than Mr. Beeston. He appeared on the platform with a rug over his arm and a hand-bag in his hand, while behind him followed a porter wheeling a truck, on which were a portmanteau and a hatbox, presumably the property of Beeston, who was clearly bound on a journey. I watched him down the platform, saw him get into a first-class compartment, the ticket collector then examined his ticket, and in another few minutes the train was steaming out of the station.

Button-holing the ticket inspector, I asked him

where the gentleman in the first-class carriage, indicating Beeston, had booked to; and received for answer that his ticket was for Llandudno, in Wales. The mention of Wales was suggestive to me. Mrs. M'Neil came from Wales. Was it not possible that she was at Llandudno—the well-known and famous watering-place—and that he was going to see her? Of course this was mere conjecture, but it seemed to me to have in it the elements of correctness, taken in conjunction with all that had gone before. At any rate, I slept on the matter, with the result that the following day I resolved to journey to Llandudno too. As I was now well known to Beeston and Mrs. M'Neil, I took the precaution to so far change my appearance that recognition on their part was not probable.

The time of year was early in September, a month in which Llandudno is usually very crowded, and by a better class of people than those who resort there in the earlier summer months. I arrived on a Friday morning, and on the Saturday eagerly scanned the visitors' lists for the name of Beeston, but could not find it. I was somewhat disappointed at this. I say "somewhat," because I was prepared to learn that he was not there under his own name. Then, of course, there was the possibility that he had arrived too late that week for his name to appear in the lists, so I called at the various offices to inquire if in their compilations for the ensuing week the name appeared. But in each case I received a negative answer; nor was I any more successful in my search for the name of Mrs. M'Neil. But she was less likely even than he was to be there in her own name, assuming that it was a pre-arranged thing that they should meet.

As most people know, Llandudno is a large place,

with numerous hotels and hundreds of lodging-houses, big and little, and when all these places are crowded it is a matter far from easy to spot any particular individual whom you may be desirous of finding, unless, of course, you are furnished with a name. On studying the lists again I noted the name of a "Mrs. Ellen Royton, Glasgow." There were a good many people from Glasgow, but I remembered that Mrs. M'Neil's Christian name was Ellen, and I began to wonder if Ellen Royton was the lady I wished to discover. Royton was rather an uncommon name, and not a Scotch one, and those two facts led me to think it was highly probable that Ellen Royton and Ellen M'Neil was one and the same person. At any rate, proof one way or the other was not very difficult to obtain. Mrs. Royton's address was a large boarding-house on the Parade, and thither I betook myself to inquire if I could be accommodated with a room for a day or two. I was told that I could, and so I soon removed my small belongings from the hotel where I had put up.

The visitors to the house dined together at a *table d'hôte* dinner, which was served at half-past seven. I occupied a seat at the table that evening, and was disappointed in not seeing Mrs. M'Neil. After dinner I asked a waitress if Mrs. Royton had been at the table, and she answered—

"No, sir; she dines with her husband in a private sitting-room."

"Her husband is here, then?"

"Yes, sir."

"Has she been here long?"

"About five weeks, I think."

"And has her husband been with her all the time?"

"Oh no; he only arrived last Wednesday."

As Beeston left Glasgow on the Tuesday evening, he would arrive on the Wednesday morning. So I asked the waitress if "Mr. Royton" was an old gentleman.

"Yes, sir; he is much older than she is."

"Has he white hair?"

"Yes; silvery hair and whiskers."

I mentally exclaimed "Hooray!" as I felt pretty sure now I had run the old fox to earth, but I gave no outward token of my feelings; and thanking the servant for her information, I sauntered forth to listen to the band which played on the parade, and nearly opposite the house. Lighting a cigar, I promenaded up and down. It was a glorious night. The sea was calm as a mill-pond, and gemmed with reflected stars that shone brilliantly in the heavens above. Round the bandstand was a dense mass of people, and a throng moved backwards and forwards along the Promenade. There were old and young, giddy and gay; and laughter went up to the stars that watched so silently. The incense of tobacco filled the air, and mingling with the laughter were the strains of one of Beethoven's most beautiful sonatas. As I stood and peered into the faces that came into the light of the lamps and then passed into the shadows again, I wondered in how many of the hearts that beat there a worm was gnawing. Suddenly from out the shadows into the light came two faces, one veiled—a woman's, the other a man's, framed with silvery hair. His I recognized, and might have cried "Eureka!" for it was Beeston's. The lady's I could not distinguish, owing to the veil, but in the walk and figure I was sure I recognized Mrs. M'Neil. The two were arm in arm, and as they disappeared into the darkness that lay beyond the radius of the lamps, I toyed with my cigar and moralized, as I

had often and often done before, on the weakness and wickedness of poor humanity.

I had now unmistakable proof that the two people I wished to find were in Llandudno, and the following day I got confirmation that they were staying at the boarding-house, as I had surmised, and were known as Mr. and Mrs. Royton. This revelation of Beeston's infamy, and pretty Mrs. M'Neil's weakness were presumptive evidence in support of the unfortunate M'Neil's assertion with regard to his wife, and in my mind it went far to establish the theory of his innocence.

As time then did not permit of my prolonging my stay, I took the precaution to have several reliable witnesses to the fact that Beeston and the woman were staying together at the boarding-house, and amongst these witnesses was the Chief Superintendent of the Police. Having completed this little matter, I returned to Glasgow, but resolved not to let the grass grow under my feet. The information I had already gained would require to be strengthened with many material facts before an indictment against Beeston for perjury would hold good. And how to acquire these facts was a puzzle that somewhat bothered me.

A week later I went out to Beeston's farm with the intention of trying to pick up something amongst the servants that might aid me, and was a little surprised to find that Beeston himself was back again. I therefore changed my intention of interviewing the servants, and it suddenly flashed upon me to try and get hold of Mrs. M'Neil and interview her instead, relying upon my ability to so far probe her as to exact some damaging confession. That very night I started again for Llandudno on the chance of still finding her there.

Nor was I wrong. She was still at the boarding-house, and the morning following my arrival I called, sending her a card bearing a fictitious name. On the card I asked for a private interview on very urgent business. The messenger who took the card soon returned to say that the lady was poorly and could not be seen. Of course I was not likely to be deceived by such a shallow subterfuge, so I wrote a little note, saying that the matter was of the utmost importance, and that it was imperative she should see me. This had the desired effect, and I was ushered into her private sitting-room, and in a few minutes she came in, looking really charming, and fresh as a new-blown rose, but with a frightened expression in her eyes.

Recognizing me instantly, she suddenly grew deadly pale, and I thought she would have fainted. By an effort, however, she recovered herself, and, with a forced little laugh, she asked—

“To what am I to attribute the honour of this visit, Mr. Donovan?”

“Leave the word ‘honour’ out,” I said, brusquely. “My visit is due to an unalterable determination on my part to right the wronged and punish the wrong-doer if possible.”

“What do you mean?” she asked, with a little gasp.”

“I mean that I have a firm faith in your husband’s innocence.”

“But he was convicted by a jury who had all the evidence before them.”

“They had certain evidence before them, but I believe it was false,” I answered.

“Oh, humbug!” she exclaimed, cavalierly.

“Well, we shall see later on whether it is humbug or

not. Now, let me ask you why you are living here under an assumed name?"

"Because it suits me."

"And enables Mr. Beeston to visit you as your husband," I added.

"It's a lie—an infamous lie!" she stammered, once more becoming very pale.

"No, madam, it is not a lie, but truth. I have watched you, and have a dozen witnesses to prove it. Beeston has obtained a hold over you, and you have been weak, and to that weakness your husband has been sacrificed. But now you must be strong, and endeavour so far as in you lies to right your much-wronged and unhappy husband."

I had come to her prepared for one of two things, either haughty defiance or some unguarded admission that would prove valuable in helping me to unravel still more; but I was certainly not prepared for what really did happen. With a cry that seemed to be wrung from her by a pang of unendurable agony, she threw herself at my feet, and in piteous, abject humility and contrition, she gradually confessed that Beeston had long persecuted her with his attentions, but she had been afraid to give any hearing to him on account of her husband. At length he suggested that M'Neil should be accused of the robbery, and, after a terrible struggle with herself, she consented to be a party to the plot; and though she did not actually place the notes herself in the desk, she gave Beeston the facilities for so doing. It was at Beeston's instigation she left her house and went to Llandudno. But she vowed by all that was sacred, that since her husband's conviction she had never known a single happy moment. When she had finished her terrible recital, I

raised her up and placed her on the sofa. I then asked her for writing materials, and she pointed to a side table. So I got some sheets of notepaper and wrote out the substance of her confession. When it was finished I read it over to her, and asked her if it was correct, and she said it was. I then told her I was going to send for the Chief Superintendent of the Police to witness her signature. This almost threw her into hysterics, and she begged and prayed of me not to do that, as it would disgrace her in the house. So I told her to put on her things, and go with me to the station, which she reluctantly did. There the confession was again read to her, and its accuracy being admitted, she appended her signature, and I and the Superintendent attested it. I next exacted from her a promise that she would not telegraph to Beeston to warn him, and I would do all I could to help her.

Armed with the precious document, I took the next train back to Glasgow, and immediately sought an interview with the lawyers who had had M'Neil's case in hand. They lost no time in applying for and obtaining a warrant for Beeston's arrest on a charge of conspiracy and wilful and corrupt perjury, and I had the pleasure of executing it. I don't know that I ever saw a man so taken aback and so utterly cast down as he was when he realized that his sin had at last found him out. He recovered, however, before his trial came on, and having plenty of means he engaged a leading pleader from Edinburgh to defend him. We had to subpoena Mrs. M'Neil as a witness, and under oath her shameful story was wrung from her, and corroborated the confession she had made to me.

Beeston's counsel fought very hard for his client, and tried with might and main to prove that his victim,

Mrs. M'Neil, was actuated by malice against him. But the case was too clear for sensible men to be deceived. The verdict consequently went against him, the sentence being two years' imprisonment. Of course, M'Neil was released immediately, and he at once commenced an action for divorce from his wife, and an action for damages against Beeston—first for slander, and second for false imprisonment. In both actions he was successful, and he obtained a thousand pounds from Beeston, which was by no means a large sum, having regard to what he had suffered. Apart from this, however, the public took the matter up, and showed their sympathy by presenting him with a cheque for five hundred pounds and an illuminated address. Of course he was very grateful to me, and presented me with a silver cigarette case bearing a suitable inscription, and this case I still treasure amongst many other valued souvenirs. What became of his unhappy wife I never knew. I sympathized strongly with her, considering she was more sinned against than sinning, and I would have tendered her help to a better way of life, but she disappeared immediately after the trial, and I saw her no more.

M'Neil himself went out to Australia, and some years later I heard that he was a flourishing sheep farmer, and, having married again, was the proud father of a charming family.

WHO DID THE DEED?

ONE October evening, just as it was growing dusk, the door-bell of the residence of Doctor Lennox Campbell was rung violently as the doctor was in the act of sitting down to dinner. Dr. Campbell's house was situated in the neighbourhood of the Medical College, Edinburgh, and, having earned a reputation for himself, he had a large practice both as a consulting physician and practising surgeon. He had been out all the afternoon visiting patients, and, returning home thoroughly tired and exhausted, he was looking forward to his dinner and the genial society of his wife and children as a means of recuperating his exhausted energies and reviving his drooping spirits. As the sounds of the clanging bell pealed through the house he guessed their purport. Long experience had taught him to distinguish pretty well between an ordinary visitor and a ringer who wished to engage his services. But in the way in which the bell was now rung there was something ominous. It suggested a terrible accident, or somebody suddenly seized with dangerous illness; and in expectation of having to go out, he hastily swallowed the soup that had been placed before him, and tossed off a glass of sherry. By that time his footman, who attended to the door, entered the room and informed him that a young woman, in a very excited state, was in the consulting room, and wished to see him immediately.

"Did she state what she wanted, John?" asked the doctor.

"No, sir."

"Very well, then, I will proceed with my dinner, and she must wait," answered the doctor, with relieved feelings, coming to the conclusion that the unexpected visitor had no great cause to display so much urgency. Ten minutes later, however, the footman came to him again to say that the young woman had sent word that it was a case of life and death. On hearing this, the doctor rose from his dinner and went to the consulting room, where he found an exceedingly pretty girl about twenty years of age. Her dress betokened her as belonging to the working class, although she was neatly attired. She wore slippers on her feet, and had had a shawl over her head, but it had slipped down to her shoulders, and revealed that she was in possession of a splendid head of auburn hair. Her bareheadedness and slippered feet seemed to indicate that she had run out hurriedly from some place not far off. She was in a state of almost hysterical excitement, and was weeping bitterly.

"Well, my lassie, and what's the matter with you?" asked the doctor, as he eyed her keenly with professional interest, and noted the details I have mentioned.

"Oh, if you please, sir, will you come at once to my mother's house?" she exclaimed. "There's a young man lying there in awful agony, and we fear he is at the point of death."

"Who is the young man?"

"He is a lodger."

"And who is your mother?"

"She is Mistress Kinnear, and we live in the High Street."

Having elicited these brief particulars, the doctor, who was a humane man, said he would be with her in five minutes, and, thinking no more about his dinner or his family, he hastily put on his hat and topcoat, and set off with Bessie Kinnear—Bessie was her christian name—for her mother's house. On the way, he questioned the girl about the sick man, so that he might have some facts to go upon, and he elicited from her—although her excitement made her somewhat incoherent—that he was an Italian, that his name was Ferdinand Rubino, that he had been attacked with illness about three weeks before, but got over it without seeing a doctor. That the illness from which he was then suffering had come on that afternoon, and when she left the house he seemed to be in the throes of death.

Mrs. Kinnear occupied a middle flat in one of the old tenements near the top of the High Street, and, when the doctor arrived, he was admitted by a gross, stout, fluffy-haired woman, who said—

“I fear it's a' ower, doctor, and the puir lad's gaen.”

Without asking her any questions, he followed her to a front room, where, lying on a bed, was a young man with intensely dark hair, an olive complexion, and finely chiselled, almost classical features. His face, however, was drawn and pinched with suffering; black rims were under his eyes, which had sunk into his head, while a sickly green pallor had overspread his face. His skin was cold and clammy, and his hands clenched so tightly that the nails had cut into the palms, and in some paroxysm of suffering he had bitten his under-lip through. The room presented a scene of great disorder, and as he had vomited a great deal, the bedclothes, as

well as the floor round about the bed, were much soiled.

A hasty examination enabled the doctor to detect signs of life, and he asked that a copious supply of hot water might be procured, and a bath if possible, and brandy with all speed. The brandy was forthcoming in a few minutes, but the bath was not so easily procured, and, as is almost invariably the case amongst such people, hot water was as scarce as gold, although the value of hot water in illness is often more precious than gold. By means of the brandy the doctor brought back warmth into his patient's body, and revived the all but extinct spark of life.

A little more than half an hour elapsed before the bath and the hot water were ready. Then the doctor had the sick man undressed and placed in the bath. Subsequently he decided that the man should be removed to the Infirmary without delay. To this Mrs. Kinnear offered some objection, saying that she was quite able to attend to him, but Dr. Campbell insisted that the man should go, and while a cab was being procured the doctor busied himself in collecting a quantity of the vomited matter, for by this time he had formed a definite opinion that the patient was suffering from violent and irritant poison, though he did not mention his suspicions. At last, the invalid being ready, and well swathed in blankets, he was carried down, still unconscious, and the doctor accompanied him to the Infirmary. Arrived there, a consultation was immediately held, and the doctor was confirmed in his opinion that it was a case of poisoning, though what the poison was could not then be accurately determined, as the man's symptoms were of course unknown. But certain appearances about the eyes and skin, no less

than a characteristic swelling of the abdomen, led the medical men to believe that the patient was suffering from the effects of antimony.

Antimony not being by any means a popular poison in the same sense as arsenic or strychnine, it was not often used as a means of destroying life; and, indeed, there have been but very few cases of the kind in Great Britain during the last fifty years. In small quantities it produces vomiting, and if that is copious there are no serious after-effects. But in large doses the agony that ensues is fearful, for it slays slowly though surely, at the same time that it tortures as few other poisons can. It is, therefore, very seldom resorted to as a means of self-destruction, for people who wish to rid themselves of the burden of life seek for as swift and painless a mode as possible. It has, however, occasionally been employed with murderous intent, under the impression, presumably, that it could not easily be detected by medical men. Up to about thirty years ago there was some justification for this impression, for though it had been used medicinally in cholera, and also as a palliative, if not as a remedy for inflammation of the lungs—some peculiar diathesis of the disease enabling the patient to endure large doses of the tartar emetic—its specific action as an irritant poison was certainly not generally known in the profession.

It so chanced that Doctor Campbell had had his attention directed to it through a child of his having accidentally swallowed some tartar emetic. The child recovered, but the doctor was induced to devote considerable study to the nature and peculiarities of the poison, and he became acquainted with some of the effects it produces, as well as the changes it brings about in the appearance of the person suffering from an overdose.

Amongst these appearances are a peculiar leaden pallor of the skin, and an apparent elongation of the eyelids. There is also invariably swelling of the epigastrium. The patient vomits tremendously, has diarrhoea, and becomes delirious. He was enabled, therefore, to pronounce an opinion that Ferdinand Rubino was under the influence of antimonial poisoning, and he was supported in this by his colleagues. Now, knowing that there were very, very few recorded cases of suicide by antimony, he at once suspected foul play, and it was due to this astuteness that I was called upon the scene at this early stage. It happened that I lived close to Doctor Campbell's house, and was well acquainted with him, and having left his patient in good hands, and, notwithstanding the lateness of the hour, he sent me a message asking me to see him immediately. I lost no time in calling upon him, and he at once gave me the foregoing particulars, and wound up with saying, "Now, it strikes me very forcibly, Mr. Donovan, that there has been foul play, for what reason I cannot of course even conjecture. But I think you should look into the matter, and secure anything likely to aid us before any one interested in doing so may have the opportunity of destroying damaging and tangible facts. Do you understand what I mean?"

"I think I do," I said. "If a crime has been committed, not a moment should be lost in trying to spot the criminal. That is what you mean, is it not?"

"Precisely. Assuming that poison has been wilfully administered to this unfortunate man, the probabilities are the guilty person is some one living in the same house. Having that in my mind, I did not mention my suspicion to any one there about the young fellow being poisoned, but his removal to the Infirmary

may have alarmed them, and they will employ the night in removing everything likely to afford a clue. But even supposing it is a case of suicide, we should endeavour to get absolute proof, for I do not believe it possible the man can live."

I told him that, on the strength of his statements, I would at once go round to the head office, which was close by, and report the affair, and if I received official instructions to proceed in the matter, I would not delay a moment unnecessarily.

When I left his house the Tron clock was just striking one. A few roysterers lingered in the streets, but otherwise they were deserted, and a chill wind went whistling in the alleys and wynds with a dirge-like mournfulness. On consulting with the officer on duty at the station, he decided that it would be better to wait until the morning before taking any steps, and to have the report of the Infirmary doctors. I somewhat reluctantly acquiesced in this decision, and went home to bed.

About nine o'clock I called at the Infirmary, and was informed that Rubino had been dead an hour and a half, and the following report was presented to me:—

Death was due to a powerful, irritant poison; and though, pending the result of an analysis and *post-mortem* examination, an absolute opinion could not be expressed, it was tolerably certain that the man had died from the effects of tartar emetic or antimony. Some time before his death he rallied, though never became coherent. He raved a great deal in the delirium which usually supervenes before death in antimonial poisoning, and he repeatedly called for "Flora." He also exclaimed several times, "She has done it; she has done it! I knew she would." And once he moaned, "You are a

she-devil ! I believe you would kill me if you could." Just before he expired, he rose up in his bed, and the united strength of three or four nurses was required to keep him from throwing himself out. While in this paroxysm he shrieked, "God in heaven keep her from me—she will do for me ! Take her away—take her away !"

Then ensued the fatal exhaustion, and he gradually sank, moaning piteously up to almost the last moment.

Every attempt was made to get from him some statement that might be of service in clearing up the mystery of his death, but without avail, for he was quite incapable of understanding what was said to him. As he had been taken to the Infirmary without his clothes, there was nothing on his person likely to be of use, and so I proceeded at once to the residence of Mrs. Kinnear.

I found she was a widow with one daughter—Bessie—and two sons ; one of them being a sailor, and then at sea ; the other, Richard, was a cabinet-maker by trade, and in the employment of a well-known Edinburgh firm. He was single, and lived with his mother, but when I called he had gone to his work. In addition to her son and daughter, Mrs. Kinnear had four single young men lodgers living with her. They had all gone to their work but one. He was an Englishman named Peter Holland, twenty-five years of age, and was in the service of the North British Railway Company as a booking clerk, but did not go on duty on that particular day until one o'clock. Of the deceased, Ferdinand Rubino, I gathered the following particulars. He was an Italian, and had lived with the Kinnears for two years. He earned his living as a teacher of languages, but was exceedingly reticent about his affairs,

and it was not known which part of Italy he came from, or whether he had relatives in Scotland or England or not. He was fond of gaiety, and generally stayed out late at night; but he was considered to be steady and very honourable. Latterly he had received occasional visits from a young lady, who seemed to be older than he was. He used to speak of her as "Miss Edith Walker," and he told Mrs. Kinnear that she was engaged to him. There was reason to believe, however, they were not altogether in accord, and that they quarrelled. On the day of his fatal illness she had visited him in the morning, and high words passed between them. She left hurriedly, and seemed to be very excited. A few minutes later, Mrs. Kinnear had occasion to go into his room, and she found him sitting with his elbows on the table, and his face resting in his hands. She asked him what was the matter, but he threw himself on to a couch, and muttered something in Italian which she did not understand. It was his custom to take luncheon with the family at one o'clock, and he appeared as usual on this particular day, and seemed to have recovered his spirits. When the meal was finished, he and Bessie played a game of draughts in his room, as they frequently did, and he smoked several cigarettes and drank some wine. A little later he complained of feeling unwell, and went to lie down in his bedroom. In the course of an hour he rang the bell violently, and when his landlady rushed in she found him vomiting dreadfully, and in great pain. As she knew that he was subject to attacks of biliousness she did not think his illness was serious. A few days before he had been unwell, and had got a bottle of medicine from a chemist, which he had been taking since; and when she asked him what he had had since

his luncheon, he answered, nothing but a dose of his medicine and some wine. He rallied a little after vomiting, and dozed; but again became ill, and grew rapidly worse, so that at last Bessie was despatched for the doctor.

The foregoing particulars were given to me by Mrs. Kinnear. Naturally I asked her where the medicine-bottle she had referred to was, and, to my surprise, she said she believed it had been thrown away by her daughter. This struck me as a suspicious circumstance, and I told her the bottle must be forthcoming or she might get into trouble, whereupon she became agitated, and told me I should probably find it in the common ashpit below. I at once went down to the ashpit in the little courtyard at the back of the house, and there I found under some rubbish an eight-ounce medicine-bottle with Rubino's name written on the label, which was that of a chemist in Prince's Street. The neck of the bottle was broken, and that no doubt had been done when it was thrown into the pit. Of course I took charge of the bottle, and carefully guarded it, for I found that some few drops of liquid still remained in it.

Having done with Mrs. Kinnear—who did not impress me as being either a very sincere or very sympathetic woman—I was desirous of interviewing Bessie, her daughter, but I was told she was ill in bed and could not see me. On hearing this, I sent an urgent message to Doctor Campbell, and asked him to come at once. This he did at considerable inconvenience, and, in spite of protests on the part of the mother, we proceeded to Bessie's room. My object in taking this course was that I had come to the opinion she might be able to throw some light on the mystery, but the doctor

certified that she really was ill, and she was in such an excited, nervous condition that we could get nothing out of her except this remarkable expression—

“For God’s sake don’t accuse me of having poisoned him!”

She repeated it two or three times, and it had one significance at least—it proved that *she knew that Rubino had really been poisoned.*

I found Peter Holland an exceedingly intelligent, plain, straightforward man. He had been pretty intimate with Rubino, and confirmed what I had already gathered about his reticence. He never talked about his own affairs, his reserve in this respect being extraordinary. But Holland had heard him say incidentally once that he had been born in Fiesole, in Tuscany; that his father was a small landed proprietor there, and that his mother was descended from a noble Italian family. He was of a very lively and hopeful disposition, and was believed to be engaged to a Miss Edith Walker. Holland was of opinion, however, that they did not get on very well together, as they had been heard quarrelling, and on several occasions after she had gone Rubino appeared to be excited and hurt. Miss Walker was described as being considerably older than Rubino, and a fine, tall, handsome woman, with a commanding presence and stately carriage. She was fair complexioned, with blue eyes and auburn hair. She dressed exceedingly well, and conveyed the impression that she moved in a good position. Holland stated positively that there had been a good deal of flirtation between Rubino and Bessie Kinnear. She was in the habit of going to his room and playing games with him. Occasionally they went out together, and he had taken her on excursions. Whatever his

feelings for her might have been, there could be no doubt that she was passionately attached to him, and her jealousy became very manifest whenever Miss Walker was in the house, and once she had exclaimed in Holland's presence—

“I hate that woman, and I should like to kill her.”

I questioned Holland as to whether he thought Rubino likely to commit suicide, and he was very emphatic in his assertion that he did not think so. He had no opinion to offer about the case; at any rate, if he had, he would not express it. He had been on night-duty the previous day, and did not leave the house till the afternoon. He was aware that Miss Walker was there before he went out, and subsequently Mrs. Kinnear told him that she thought Rubino and “his lady love” had been wrangling. Just before leaving for his duties he knocked at Rubino's door to have five minutes' chat with him. He found him playing draughts with Bessie. He seemed in perfect health then, though not quite as lively as usual. He was smoking a cigarette, and on the table was a bottle of Italian wine and a tumbler with wine in it. Rubino was in the habit of drinking wine, and used to have a quantity at a time sent to him from Italy.

Holland did not return to his lodgings until between eleven and twelve. He was then informed that Rubino had been terribly ill, that a doctor had been sent for, and had carried the sick man off to the Infirmary. Of course he was very much amazed, and inquired of Mrs. Kinnear what Rubino had been suffering from, and she answered she thought it was just one of his old bilious attacks; but Bessie, who was present, wrung her hands like one demented, and exclaimed—

“Oh no, it’s worse than that—it’s worse than that! He’ll die—he’ll die—he’ll die!”

Whereupon her mother became angry and said—

“Hold your tongue, you fool! What do you know about it?”

After that Bessie seemed to become more excited, and her mother put her to bed, and her brother went and sat with her.

Such was Holland’s version of the story, and he certainly gave me the impression that he spoke with the utmost conscientiousness. Nor did he hesitate to say that he considered the whole affair very mysterious, and ought to be inquired into. He seemed greatly shocked when he heard that his friend was dead.

When I first arrived at the house, Mrs. Kinnear was busy cleaning out Rubino’s room, but I ordered her to desist, and leave it exactly as it was. And I had all his things put into a wardrobe, which I locked and took the key. I also locked the door of the room, and took the key of that also.

So far as my inquiries up to that point enabled me to come to any conclusion, I quite agreed with Mr. Holland that the matter wanted looking into. That it was a case of either suicide or murder seemed to me clear. But whichever it was, there was a good deal of mystery about the affair, and there was much that would have to be explained to the satisfaction of the Fiscal. It was not until pretty late that evening that a *post-mortem* examination was made of Rubino’s body. Doctor Campbell assisted, and I called at his house about ten o’clock to learn the result, and he told me that the man had undoubtedly died of a powerful poison; and it was almost equally certain that the poison was antimony, for the stomach and bowels were terribly

corroded and eaten away, and there was general inflammation of all the mucous membrane. Save the poison, there was nothing in the man's body to account for death, as all the organs was wonderfully healthy. He was well nourished and perfectly formed. Of course, various parts of the internal organs had been removed and sealed up for analysis, together with the substance Doctor Campbell had brought from Rubino's room.

The medical report, together with my own, were submitted to the authorities, and it was immediately decided that the fullest investigation would have to be made, and I received certain instructions, which I proceeded at once to act upon. My first step was to go to Mrs. Kinnear's house in company with an assistant, and, after a thorough search of the premises we carried away certain articles, together with Rubino's boxes, and everything else that belonged to him. The boxes were duly opened in the presence of witnesses, and everything was carefully examined for antimony; but none was found. Nor was any found in any part of the house. There were several packets of letters. Some of these were from his mother and a sister. They were written in Italian, and dated from Fiesole. One packet, containing about two dozen letters, was eagerly scrutinized, for the letters were written by a woman, and were signed "Flora." The dates of them were widely apart, except some of the latter ones. The early ones were couched in the most affectionate and passionate terms. Some began, "My own beloved heart and soul," "My own precious darling," "Light of my life." In the later letters these extravagant phrases gave place to "My dear Ferdinand," "Dearest Ferdinand," and at last to the conventional "Dear

Ferdinand.” Amongst these were four that had been written within twelve days, and the last only two days before his death. As these letters had a most important bearing on the case, I will give an excerpt or two from them. In the first occurred this passage:—

LETTER I.

“I trust you have now thought over what I asked of you at our last meeting. It is no use mincing matters; facts are facts, and cannot be gainsaid. I have been living in a fool’s paradise, but am awake. You cast a spell upon me, but it has passed away, and now I am clothed and in my right mind. Your decision, therefore, must be given immediately. Delay will be fatal to my interests, my projects, my hopes. I wait your answer by return of post.”

LETTER II.

“Do you wish to drive me mad? I pray you, on my knees, be merciful, and have some consideration for me. God knows I do not forget, and never shall forget, what we have been to each other. But the past is a wild, passionate dream, and now in my sober senses I stand aghast at my folly. You must—you *must*—you will do as I ask you. Write immediately and say so, and relieve me of the fearful strain I am now enduring.”

LETTER III.

“Will nothing move you; will nothing reach your heart? Are you pitiless? I have always thought chivalry was a characteristic of your countrymen, but it seems to be lacking in you. If I have worshipped an idol under the impression it was a true god, and now discover and confess my error, is there no pardon for me? Is a woman to suffer all her life because of one

error? I say again that you must release me. The past is dead; bury it out of sight and forget it. You are a man, and can make your own future. I am a woman; why should you blight and blast what remains to me of life? Once more I appeal to your pity, your honour. We have both partaken of the fool's herb, and it hath made us drunk. But we are sober now—at least I am, and I curse myself for my folly. But when we have confessed our sin and truly repent we are forgiven our sins; forgive me mine, and let me go my ways."

LETTER IV.

"Are you a fiend incarnate that you can thus deliberately torture me? I say again that you must do as I request you, or dread the consequences. A woman roused to fury is dangerous, and you are making me furious. I say, beware; for if I am to be crushed beneath the ruins of my air-drawn castles, do not imagine that you will escape. Retribution shall smite you as surely and as unerringly as night follows day. I have been weak, but now I am a giant in my wrath; do not defy that wrath lest it blight you. I will seek an interview with you on Wednesday, and we shall meet for the last time, so be prepared to grant my request."

* * * *

In the foregoing I have only given a brief extract from each letter, but, as the reader will see, the extracts seem to throw some light on the man's death; and so I thought. Not one of the letters found amongst Rubino's effects bore any address, and not one was signed with any other name but "Flora." From the very first, the writer had evidently been anxious to preserve a certain amount of secrecy and caution,

making it clear that the correspondence had been clandestine.

When I had perused the letters from which I have given the extracts, I said to myself—

“This is a case of murder, and Flora must be found.”

The more the circumstances attending Rubino's death were looked into, the more mysterious did they appear. It was soon proved beyond doubt, by the analysis of the viscera and other things, that the poison from which he had died was antimony. The few drops of medicine in the bottle which I had recovered from the ashpit were found to contain antimony, and the remainder of the wine in the bottle from which the unfortunate man drank after his dinner, and which was seen on the table by Peter Holland when he went into the room, was also poisoned with antimony. It was a pint bottle, and contained about one-third of the wine. It had been put into the cupboard in his room, where I found it. My opinion was that it had been forgotten, or it would have shared the fate of the medicine-bottle.

There was now conclusive evidence that the poison had been administered in two vehicles, namely, his medicine and his wine. The chemists who made up the medicine knew Rubino as a customer, and the physic was a simple antibilious preparation which they were in the habit of putting up for him, as he suffered from periodical attacks of biliousness, but with that exception never ailed anything. Having regard to the fact that Bessie Kinnear had access to his room, and she was with him on the day of his fatal seizure, and that the wine he then drank of in her presence was poisoned, and that she had uttered words in my own

and in Holland's presence which seemed to imply a knowledge of what he was suffering from, I arrested her on suspicion of being accessory to his death. She was a very pretty and attractive girl; not particularly well educated, but with a great deal of natural shrewdness. She did not seem very much surprised when I told her the charge, but she said—

“It is monstrous to suppose I have killed him. I was too fond of him, and he had told me that some day he would probably marry me. What reason, therefore, had I to take his life?”

My next step was to try and trace the poison to her possession, but in this I failed, though in a box where she kept some of her clothes and other articles I found a book entitled “Some Remarkable Cases of Poisoning.” One of these described the death of a woman from antimony, which was administered to her by her husband, who wished to marry another woman. The pages of this particular part of the book gave evidence of having been much read, the pages being thumb-marked and otherwise soiled. The story described the effects of antimony, and said that if administered in small doses death would ensue as if from natural causes.

I have mentioned that three weeks before his death Rubino was attacked with illness which resembled that of which he died, according to the evidence of Holland, and he had also been similarly affected a few days before his death, and, believing himself that he was suffering from biliousness, owing to the vomiting, he had been to his chemist's and got the medicine made up. All these points suggested that small doses of the fatal drug had been administered to him in accordance with the details mentioned in the book; and though I admit

that legally it was slender evidence, it certainly told against Bessie.

As she had been very intimate with Rubino, I questioned her about his connection with "Miss Edith Walker," and she declared that she knew nothing whatever about her. And, though Rubino had spread a report in the house that he was engaged to be married to Miss Walker, he solemnly declared to Bessie that he only did that to prevent the gossips from chattering, and that he thought more of Bessie's little finger than he did of all Miss Walker's body. But, in her telling of this, Bessie made it manifest that she had been intensely jealous of the woman, and hated her, as she had declared in Holland's presence she did.

Of course, it was probable enough that Rubino really had made love to Bessie, and had led her to believe he was exceedingly fond of her. But the letters signed "Flora" in his possession proved that, whoever Flora was, there was some strong link between them, and it became imperatively necessary that Flora should be brought to light. It was an exceedingly ugly circumstance against her that, in spite of the publicity given to the case, she had not come forward to clear herself. It was impossible to suppose she could have remained in ignorance of his death, for every paper, big and little, devoted columns and columns to the sensational story.

The difficulty in the way of discovering her lay in the fact that we did not know her name, and in the absence of any address on her letters. It was apparent that Rubino had been in the habit of taking the letters out of their envelopes, folding them longways, and numbering them consecutively. The envelopes would therefore probably be burnt, and so we had not even a postmark to guide us. In her letter "No. 4," from

which I have given an excerpt, she wrote, "I will seek an interview with you on Wednesday for the last time, so be prepared to grant my request." Wednesday, the day of his fatal seizure, Edith Walker visited him, and from this it was right to premise that Edith Walker was an assumed name, and that she was the mysterious Flora of the letters, and on this assumption we resolved to advertise for her. From the information furnished by Mr. Holland, Mrs. Kinnear, Bessie, and other people in the house, we were enabled to describe her pretty accurately, and, as there were reasons to suppose from her visiting him that she resided in or near Edinburgh, the advertisements were confined to the local papers. As they produced no result, it was decided to try the effect of a reward, and fifty pounds was offered for any information that would lead to her discovery. A week later a man presented himself at the Central Office, and said that from the description of the woman wanted, he believed she was the daughter of a gentleman named Harrington, who resided in the neighbourhood of Queensferry. The name of the informant was Michael Casey, an Irishman, and he had been in the service of Mr. Harrington as a gardener.

In an account-book showing his receipts, found amongst the papers of Rubino, were three or four entries, in Italian, of money received from a Mr. Harrington for tuition. And when Michael Casey was shown a photograph of Rubino, he said he believed he had seen him at Mr. Harrington's house.

On the strength of this information I set to work, and soon learnt that Mr. Harrington was a retired jeweller, and said to be exceedingly well off. He lived with his family—his wife being dead—in a fine house in Queensferry. The family consisted of three sons and

two daughters, the younger of the two being named Flora, the elder one Jessie, who was said to be thirty-three years of age, while her sister was nearly thirty. For some time Ferdinand Rubino had visited the house twice a week to give Flora lessons in French and Italian, but the lessons had been discontinued months before his death. In addition to this information, I was enabled to procure a photograph of Miss Flora Harrington, and also a specimen of her handwriting. The photographs were at once recognized by Peter Holland and Mrs. Kinnear as that of the lady they had known as Edith Walker, while the handwriting was identical with that of the letters.

With this evidence to go upon, a warrant for Flora Harrington's apprehension was issued and entrusted to me for execution, but I found that both Flora and her sister Jessie were from home, and I therefore sought an interview with Mr. Harrington. He was an exceedingly pleasant and genial man, well advanced in years, and the news that there was a warrant out for his daughter's arrest fell upon him like a thunderbolt. He declared solemnly that he had no idea any acquaintance had been kept up between Flora and Rubino, for had he done so, he would have turned her from his house penniless. Rubino had been dismissed because some of the servants had expressed an opinion that he was too familiar with Flora; and this coming to Mr. Harrington's ears, made him very angry, and he personally told Rubino that he must never enter his house again. And when he took his daughter to task, she assured him that there had been nothing between her and her teacher. Both the ladies were at that moment in France, and when I inquired the date of their departure, I found that it was four days after Rubino's death had been made public.

The journey was very hurriedly decided upon, and they gave their father to understand that they had received an invitation from an old schoolfellow of Flora's who had married a Frenchman, and was living with her husband in Lyons.

I saw at once that, with the slender evidence we had, it might be difficult to get Flora extradited, and I told Mr. Harrington he would have to deliver to me any letters and other papers belonging to his daughter which she might have left behind. Although bowed down and crushed with grief, he said that if his daughter had been guilty of the awful deed imputed to her she must suffer the consequences, but he was convinced in his own mind that she was perfectly innocent, and had nothing to conceal. So he gave me every facility for searching her boxes and wardrobes, but, though I found letters from other people, not a scrap of Rubino's writing was forthcoming. And yet it was certain that he must have written much to her, because all her letters found in his possession were answers to his. So convinced was her father of her innocence, that he said she should come back, even if he had to fetch her himself from France.

I next tried to discover if she had ever been known to purchase antimony, and these inquiries elicited the fact that for some time quantities of antimony had been employed in Mr. Harrington's stables for the cure of a disease from which some of his horses were suffering. One of the sick horses was a favourite of Flora's, and she was in the habit of attending it, so that she not only knew of the existence of antimony in the stables, but used it herself.

I need scarcely say that this was regarded as a very grave piece of evidence against her, and unless she

returned at once, it was decided to apply to the French Government for her extradition.

In the meantime, efforts were made to strengthen the evidence against Bessie Kinnear, for so far there was nothing against her which would warrant putting her on her trial. But as all efforts failed, and nothing could be got to actually incriminate her, it was finally decided to discharge her, though secret orders were given that she was to be kept under surveillance.

As regards Flora Harrington, the necessity of applying to the French Government was obviated by the return of the suspected woman. I believe that her friends represented to her that by continuing to keep away she would be tacitly admitting guilt, and that it would be better for her to come back and stand her trial, for if she was innocent she had nothing to fear. The consequence was she returned and gave herself up. She proved to be a remarkably fine-looking woman, while the formation of her mouth and the expression of her eyes indicated a strong will and an obstinate disposition.

Now that she was under arrest, it became of the highest importance that no time should be lost in getting evidence together of her close connection with Rubino. In an interview I had with her sister Jessie, who had returned with her, and who was terribly cut up, I elicited that she believed there had been some love-making in the first instance between Rubino and her sister, but she knew nothing from absolute personal knowledge, as she was herself away nearly all the time in Algiers with a sick brother, who had since died. She had questioned her sister, who admitted that there had been some flirtation, but denied anything serious, and for some time she had been engaged to a gentle-

man in business in Liverpool, and they were to be married shortly.

On hearing this, I considered it of importance that I should see the gentleman, whose name it is not necessary to mention, and I proceeded to Liverpool for that purpose. It can well be imagined that he was greatly distressed at the grave charge hanging over the head of his intended wife. And while he confessed himself unable at that stage to believe in her guilt, he had strong reason for thinking that she had deceived him in some way. She had recently seemed much depressed, and when he asked her for the cause, she said that she had something on her mind which she ought to have told him at first. Naturally, he urged her to state what the something was, and she replied that she was afraid it might separate them for ever. Subsequently she promised to tell him on a particular occasion, but when the time came she excused herself on the ground that she could not muster up courage. He was annoyed at this, and on visiting her soon after, he said he had made up his mind to give her up, as she did not consider him worthy of her confidence. Thereupon, she became greatly affected, and confessed that she had had a lover, a teacher of languages, who had been giving her lessons. He had infatuated her to such an extent that she believed she was madly in love with him, and had written him passionate letters; but she soon came to her senses, and severed the connection.

On hearing this, her affianced husband asked her if that was all, and she said it was, whereupon he said he attached no great importance to that. But something in her manner, and something that she let drop afterwards, induced him to think that she had kept something

back, and that there was a more serious aspect to her connection with Rubino. Although he had not mentioned the matter to any member of her family, and continued on the same footing as heretofore, he had pursued some inquiries on his own account, but so far without any avail.

When I left this gentleman a new thought began to take shape in my mind, as the result of what he had told me. And those letters of Flora's, and which I had not told him about, had a new meaning for me. When I got back to Edinburgh I obtained permission to peruse them again, and that refusal strengthened the thought. Then I resolved to trace as far as possible Flora Harrington's movements from her first connection with Rubino down to her visit to him on the day of his fatal illness. It was a work of no small difficulty, but I brought to light one important fact. Soon after Rubino ceased to go to the house, she told her father that she wanted to go to Algiers to see her invalid brother, and that she had a lady friend in London who was about to start for Algiers for the benefit of her health, and so she would have a companion. Accordingly, she left her home for London, and a few days latter wrote to her father to say that her friend—a Mrs. Howard she called her—was too ill to travel at present, and she was going to stay and nurse her. As a matter of fact, she did not go to Algiers at all, but remained away three months, and then returned home, looking very ill and worn.

In a letter she addressed to Rubino about this period, and which was amongst those found in his box, she wrote—

“I am back once more. I have had a fearful time; and I could never have believed I was capable of

practising so much deceit. It has made me ten years older, and I feel horribly and shamefully wicked.

‘ Oh, what a tangled web we weave
When first we practise to deceive.’

But I must try by a life of repentance to atone for my error. My weakness has been my ruin, and though you may have ceased to respect me, you cannot fail to pity me.”

On the strength of what I had now learned, I at once proceeded to London, and I was enabled to get indubitable proof that she did not stay with any invalid lady friend there, but at a place in Clapham, where she gave birth to a still-born child.

This, then, was the secret that had preyed upon her mind, and which she could not muster up sufficient courage to tell to the gentleman she was engaged to be married to. With the exception of the somewhat ambiguous passage I have just quoted, she did not refer to the subject in any of her letters to Rubino; but there was little doubt that before she went away she saw him frequently, and while she was in London he visited her there, and, being of a cautious nature, she had evidently been careful not to commit to writing any damning facts.

I had now collected all the links in the chain that I seemed likely to get, and in due course the unhappy woman was put upon her trial. During her imprisonment she had aged very much, and when she appeared in the dock she looked worn and haggard.

The indictment charged her with wilfully killing one Ferdinand Rubino, by administering to him a deadly poison, to wit, antimony, commonly known as tartar emetic.

It was a very long indictment, and very minute in

all its details, and care had been taken to prevent any technical legal flaw. When called upon to plead, she pled not guilty in a firm, clear voice, although it was obvious she was suffering keenly.

The evidence was then proceeded with, and it was soon seen that its weak points were the absence of anything like circumstantial proofs that she had placed the poison in either his wine or his medicine. Indeed, the evidence of Mrs. Kinnear was that she could not have put it into the wine, because the bottle from which he drank after his dinner was only opened after the prisoner had gone, and the bottle of medicine was kept in the cupboard, and she must have deliberately taken it out and poisoned it before his eyes.

The witness did not give these particulars of her own free will. They were dragged from her in cross-examination, and to the mind of more than one person who heard them they suggested the probability that after all Bessie Kinnear's hand was the one that did the deed.

In the defence it was admitted on behalf of the wretched prisoner that she had been infatuated with Rubino, and he had exercised so much influence over her that she yielded blindly to him. He was the father of her child, and she pleaded to him before the event and after to marry her, but he always refused on the grounds that he was not then prepared to burden himself with a wife. In corroboration of this, she produced some of his letters to her, in which he urged that objection. This persistent refusal on his part to make her an honourable wife caused her at last a perfect revulsion of feeling, and she knew that even if she did ultimately become his wife she would hate him. When she made the acquaintance of the gentleman from Liverpool she told

Rubino about it, but it seemed to inflame him with jealousy for a moment or two, but then he said he did not care and she could marry if she liked. Later on, however, his jealousy reasserted itself, and he declared that unless she broke off the engagement he would make his own connection with her public. Then it was she wrote those letters from which I have given extracts. She was aware of his flirtations with Bessie Kinnear, and she had urged him to marry the girl, and had offered to give him the sum of two hundred pounds towards his house-furnishing. But he pretended to be indignant, and referred to Bessie as "a fool" with whom he simply amused himself.

Although, unhappily, she did visit him on the day of his fatal illness, in order to try and induce him to sign a paper setting forth that nothing more serious than flirtation had taken place between them, she had no hand in his death. They quarrelled, for he said that if she did not marry him he would expose and ruin her; but she told him that she would commit suicide rather than marry him. When she heard of his death she became greatly alarmed, for she could not help seeing that appearances were decidedly against her, and in a moment of weakness and alarm she fled to France.

With might and main the prosecution tried to weave an invulnerable web about her; but the defence found out its vulnerable points and broke them down. The medical evidence permitted not the shadow of doubt as to the cause of death, but it could not determine whose hand had placed the fatal drug in the medicine and wine, for unquestionably both were drugged. It was, of course, an ugly fact that in the stables of the prisoner's house large quantities of antimony had been

used, and she knew of it, and had free access to the stables. But no one could be brought forward who had ever heard her speak of antimony, or had seen it in her possession. On the other hand, there was the fact that Bessie Kinnear knew of the terrible effects of antimony on the human system from the book found in her possession, but she was not known to have ever purchased the drug anywhere.

The result of the patient and exhaustive trial was that judge and jury felt the full influence of the doubt in the case, and as the woman's life was at stake she was given the benefit of the doubt, and a "non-proven" verdict was recorded.

Although this gave great satisfaction to a great many people, it gave dissatisfaction to a great many more, who did not hesitate to declare that there had been a miscarriage of justice. But they forgot that justice is not justice if it is not just. If the poison could only have been traced to the prisoner's possession the chain would have been complete, without that it was weak enough to admit the doubt; and while "not proved" did not say she was guilty, it did not say she was innocent. It simply left her free to go forth into the world again, and men could think of her as they inclined. In many respects it is a cruel and stupid verdict, as it leaves a stigma which "not guilty" removes. On the other hand, it is said to give those whose business it is to administer the law an opportunity of easing their consciences when they do not feel quite satisfied with the evidence. There is some weight in the argument that better for a dozen guilty persons to escape than for one innocent one to suffer. It must be admitted that the whole case was exceedingly unsatisfactory, and Rubino's cruel death ought to have been followed by

retribution on his murderer, if he was murdered. The "if" suggests the probability of suicide, but there was absolutely nothing to favour that theory. And I don't know but what the same can be said of an idea of my own, that there was collusion between Flora Harrington and Bessie Kinnear. But then comes the question—Why? Why should Bessie have wished his death? What had she to gain by it? Did Flora Harrington tell her that he had said that she was a fool and that he was only amusing himself with her? If so, did that so far place her in Flora's power that she was enabled to use her as a tool, and gave her the poison to put into the wine and the medicine? I do not attempt to answer these questions. They simply shadow forth a theory I worked out for myself, but which I had not a tittle of evidence to support. The whole affair is a mystery, and is likely to remain a mystery for ever. It is worth recording that about two years after the trial Bessie Kinnear committed suicide by cutting her throat. What drove her to that desperate deed? Was it the smittings of a guilty conscience, or unbearable grief for the loss of the man she professed to have loved? The reader can weigh the *pros* and *cons* for himself and draw his own conclusions.

It remains for me to say that old Mr. Harrington did not long survive the trial, and the family removed from Edinburgh. Flora embraced the Roman Catholic religion, and went to the south of France, where she renounced the world and entered a nunnery. I know not if she still lives, or has joined Rubino in a world where human problems vex not.

THE GREAT BULLION ROBBERY.

WHEN, a little while ago, an announcement was made in the papers that there had been a daring attempt to rob the bullion chests on board one of the Channel steamers, a good many people would be surprised, no doubt, to learn for the first time that bullion chests were conveyed by the Channel steamers. But the fact is, almost every day of every year large quantities of gold and silver are carried to and fro between England and the Continent, and the precious metal thus conveyed is often of immense value. As may well be supposed, extraordinary precautions are taken to safeguard this valuable freight; but, nevertheless, clever thieves have now and again made a haul in spite of all the vigilance and care exercised. The case I am about to relate is perhaps as remarkable as anything we have in the annals of crime, while the cunning, perseverance, and cleverness of the thieves invest it with more than ordinary interest. The story, indeed, reads like a romance, and yet every detail is strictly true.

To begin at the beginning. About two and a half years before the robbery was effected, a man named Peter Fleming kept a public-house in Argyle Street, Glasgow. Fleming's record was not a very good one, as he had served a short term of imprisonment for an assault, and he had been frequently fined for allowing betting on the premises, and for selling drink during

prohibited hours. His licence had also been endorsed, and he had been told that if he was again brought before the magistrates it would be cancelled altogether. Fleming had married an Italian woman, who for some years had kept a small confectioner's and ice-cream shop in a low part of the town. She had borne him several children, but they had all died young, with the exception of one—a daughter, who was about nineteen at the time I am dealing with. She had been christened Cora, and she could boast of very considerable personal attractions. But the way in which she had been brought up, and the surroundings amidst which she lived, had begot in her a certain *abandon*—to use a mild term—which did not augur well for her future.

At this time a man who was known as “Captain” Gossett used to frequent Fleming's house, and he paid considerable attention to Cora. He could lay no legitimate claim to the title of “Captain,” but had served for a short time in a volunteer corps as a sergeant, though, having got into disgrace, he had been compelled to resign. He was a locksmith by trade, and was said to be a clever workman. But he was fonder of loafing about at his ease than steadily working, and a legacy of between three and four hundred pounds, left him by a relative, seems to have been his ruin. As soon as he got the money he threw up his situation, and was constantly to be found at Fleming's public; and though he was aware that Cora had given birth to a child, which had died eleven days after it was born, he married her, and as long as there was any money in the exchequer they enjoyed themselves; for they were just those sort of people who never think of the morrow. But at last their funds

came to an end, and Fleming himself was in considerable difficulties, for he had got into arrears with his rent and was being pressed by his whisky merchant and brewer. In their difficulties it would appear that the two men laid their heads together. The result was they put the creditors off with plausible excuses; realized as much of the stock as they could; collected all the money they could lay their hands on; and one Monday morning, owing to the public-house not opening at the usual time, it was found that the enterprising family had taken their departure for fresh fields and pastures new. With the exception of some almost worthless furniture and the fittings of the bar, they had left nothing behind them. The house had closed at the usual time on the Saturday, so that they must have gone off on Sunday.

Of course, a number of people were very anxious to learn what part of the country Mr. Fleming was honouring with his presence, but he had managed his affairs so well that no information was forthcoming, and the creditors had to bear their loss as best they could.

It was not for a considerable time afterwards that the movements of Fleming, Gossett, and their wives were known. But it appears that they went from Glasgow to London, and with the money they had secured they took a public-house, as joint-partners, in the White-chapel Road. It was known as the "Three Tuns," and Fleming found it convenient to change his name to William Jackson, while Gossett became known as Ernest Hill. I shall, however, continue to call them by their real names. The Three Tuns, it seems, was much frequented by carters, lorrymen, and railway porters, and one night there was some talk amongst the

customers about a very large quantity of gold that had been sent over one of the railways, and some one remarked that there was enough gold to have kept a man rolling in wealth for the rest of his days.

“Yes,” exclaimed some one else, “if he could only have got hold of it; but the devil himself couldn’t get into them bullion chests unless he had the proper keys. Besides, a robbery would soon be detected, because the chests are weighed at various stages of the journey, and any deficiency in weight would at once arouse suspicion.”

There was one person in the bar to whom these remarks were full of a startling interest, and that gentleman was James Gossett—he had dropped the “Captain” now—who was serving liquor to the customers.

What he had heard fructified and bore fruit—evil fruit it was—and two or three weeks later he said to his father-in-law—

“Peter, do you know that tens of thousands of pounds worth of gold and silver are constantly being carried between here and France?”

Peter did not gather the drift of the question at first, and answered it by asking what that had to do with him, whereupon his most excellent son-in-law pointed out that it might have a great deal to do with him if he liked, and that, if they gave their minds to the business, a fortune awaited them. Dazzled with the prospects of making a fortune by a bold and sudden stroke, Mr. Peter Fleming readily consented to join in any undertaking the other would be pleased to propose.

The plan of the gigantic robbery was there and then begun, but it was not completed for two years. To the uninitiated reader this may seem strange, but the two

men soon discovered that they had set themselves a task which was well calculated to tax the patience, energy, and skill of any man, however clever he might be. Yet, nevertheless, they were neither daunted nor deterred, and they resolved to take their women-folk into their confidence. This was done, and it appears that the two women became quite enthusiastic over the business, indulging in all sorts of dreams as to what they would do when they had become rich beyond the dreams of avarice. There is not much doubt but that Gossett was the prime mover, and he displayed ingenuity and perseverance that, if exercised in a better cause, would have brought him honour and riches both. He was a man of observation, and he knew how to exercise his powers. He began first of all to travel about between London and Dover, and London and Folkestone, by the two different systems of railways, and, for reasons which no doubt struck him as sound, he resolved on giving all his attention to the Dover line. In a little while it became evident to him that he would have to take one or more of the railway servants into his confidence, and that was a step full of danger and difficulty. He proved himself, however, to be equal to the occasion, and by cautious inquiry, he found out that a guard named Walter Ravel lived at Dover, and let lodgings. Of course, at this time Gossett knew nothing whatever of Ravel; but it occurred to him that by living with a railway guard, he might pick up a good deal of information, and he became a lodger in Ravel's house, while, in order not to rouse suspicion, he sought for work in the town, and ultimately succeeded in getting employment with a blacksmith and bell-hanger. He passed himself off as a single man, but a little later

he found it advisable to have the co-operation of his wife, and she came down from London to stay with him ; but he represented that she was his sister, and she became known as Miss Hill.

Ravel was a married man with one son—a young fellow about two or three and twenty, who was employed in London as a booking clerk. He was in the habit of coming down to Dover at the week end to stay with his parents from Saturday to Monday, and, in consequence of this, Gossett made his acquaintance, and must have speedily determined that he was a suitable person to be taken into the plot, for he set about corrupting him, and within six months of the acquaintanceship beginning, young Frederick Ravel was in the secret. This result had been brought about in a singularly artful manner. With the concurrence of her husband, “Miss Hill” made herself very agreeable to Ravel, and he soon fell desperately in love with her. She was a showy, attractive, young woman, and Fred Ravel was of a peculiarly susceptible nature. At any rate, she acquired an influence over him which made him as wax in her hands.

For a good deal more than a year matters remained in this condition. The public-house in London was carried on by Fleming and his wife, and, as it would seem, very profitably ; while Gossett continued in his employment at Dover, working fairly steady at good wages, so that altogether these people were doing well, and might have saved money. But they were criminally inclined, and had been seized with the thirst for wealth.

During all this time Gossett steadily persevered in his plans for the robbery, and he had learned all there was to learn with regard to the transport of the bullion

over the line. This knowledge made it clear to him that nothing could be done unless impressions of the keys of the strong boxes in which the treasure was usually conveyed could be obtained. That was a problem that required a great deal of thinking out, but, owing to the confederacy of young Ravel, it was ultimately solved.

One night the station-master's office at Dover was broken into, and the safe opened with a duplicate key. Early the next morning it was discovered that an entrance had been effected into the office. But as the safe was closed all right and its contents intact, the inference drawn was that the thieves had been disturbed before they could get to work and had decamped without obtaining any plunder. But the inference was wrong; plunder was not the object. Young Ravel had ascertained that a set of duplicate keys of the bullion chest was kept by the station-master in his safe. This information was given to Gossett, who, being a locksmith, made a number of keys calculated to open the lock of an ordinary safe such as that in the station-master's office. All being ready, he forced his way into the office, succeeded in opening the safe, found the bullion keys, and took impressions of them in wax. And thus one practical step towards the completion of the design was completed.

As nothing had been stolen from the office, and the safe was all right, the officials did not make much stir about the affair; though, of course, the police were informed, and efforts were made to discover the burglar, though without result.

The next important move now on the part of the robbers was the manufacture of a set of keys from the wax impressions and here again Gossett's

artfulness was displayed in a remarkable manner, for he took the impressions to London, and had the keys made by a little locksmith down in Bermondsey. But although the keys were made something else was required, and the something else confronted the plotters with their greatest difficulty up to this time. Now, however, accurately keys may be made from an impression, it follows that they require some dressing afterwards, in order to make them fit. That is, they have to be filed smooth, and by the file adjusted to the wards. Of course, in doing this they must be tried from time to time in the lock they are to be used for. How was this to be done in the bullion case? In order that the question might be satisfactorily answered, it was felt that a new ally must be taken into the gang.

Young Ravel was still paying his addresses to "Miss Hill," and his parents believed that the young couple would soon be married. Fred, in fact, was very anxious that the marriage should take place at once, but the lady necessarily put him off by telling him that she wanted to remain single a little longer, but that, after they had made their big haul of bullion, they would get married and clear out to America or Australia. But the new ally had now to be secured, and, with a view to this end, the lady sounded the son as to what chance he thought there was of obtaining the services of his father. For many years Walter Ravel had been in the service of the Company, and bore an unblemished character. He had originally begun as a carriage cleaner, and gradually been promoted; and, having fallen into delicate health, the Company put him permanently on the Dover route as a guard, in order that he might take up his residence

by the seaside. Having regard to these circumstances, it might be supposed that he would have been proof against corrupting influences. But it is said that every man has his price, and Ravel was no exception to the rule. Gossett undertook to approach him on the subject, and it appears that the ice was first broken one Sunday night, when Mrs. Ravel had gone to church, and our young friend was out walking with his supposed *fiancée*.

According to Ravel's story, as subsequently told in a criminal Court, he was not only astounded at first, but enraged, and threatened to make the plot known immediately to the officials. Gossett told him, however, that from that moment he would be a marked man, and his life would be taken by some of the gang; for he represented what was not true—that the gang was very numerous, and had ramifications all over the country, and that it would be impossible for him to escape their vengeance. Of course it goes without saying that Ravel was a weak man, or not even a threat of this kind would have been able to deter him from doing his duty to his employers. But he fell into the net spread for him, and in a few days Gossett was enabled to announce to his companions that Ravel was secured.

Gossett now made several journeys at intervals between Dover and London, riding at certain stages of the journey in Ravel's van, where the bullion chests were carried, and by this means he was enabled to test the keys. It was found after the first trial that they wanted a good deal of filing, and they were only got to fit after much trouble. At last, however, they were adjusted to a nicety, and the rascals were enabled to open the chests. But the moment for the robbery was not yet ripe. After the long time that had been spent,

and the trouble that had been taken in perfecting the plans, the arch rogue Gossett was resolved that the haul, when made, should be a big one; and it was decided to wait until some heavy consignment of gold was being carried, and Fred Ravel was relied upon for supplying them with the necessary information. He was intimately acquainted with a fellow-clerk, who was in the chief goods department, where all consignments were entered; and as this young fellow was very hard worked, while Ravel had a fair amount of leisure during the evenings, he volunteered to help his friend with his books. He was thus in a position to learn what was passing over the line, and he seems to have used his powers of observation with very keen intelligence.

It was somewhat remarkable that during all this time Mrs. Gossett was enabled to so thoroughly deceive young Ravel that he never once suspected she was anything but what she represented herself to be—that is, a single woman, and his affianced wife. It may be doubted if he would ever have become an actor in the strange drama of crime if he had not been led away by his infatuation for this woman. Nor was this to be wondered at, for she was capable of exercising a most remarkable fascination. She seemed to have inherited from her mother all the characteristics of the Italian type. She was quick, vivacious, and witty, with an olive complexion, intensely dark hair and eyes, regular and pleasing features, perfect teeth, and a compact, plump figure. It might almost be said of her that she was as beautiful and sleek as a young leopard, and as dangerous. Certainly she got Frederick Ravel completely in her toils, and through her he blasted his whole career. She was well matched in her husband, for he was as cool, deliberate, and calculating a scoundrel

as I have ever met with. As regards Fleming and his wife, they were little more than passive agents in the hands of their daughter and son-in-law. The elder Ravel might also be classed in the same category. He was a tool without strength of mind to resist the insidious influences that were brought to bear upon him.

I have stated that in carrying bullion it is customary to weigh the boxes at different stages of the journey. The reason of this will be obvious, and any deficiency in the weight during the transit would show that the boxes had been tampered with. Of course the conspirators were well aware of this fact, and they had to make provision accordingly. They therefore provided themselves with a number of small bars of lead, and they took care that the bars should be uniform in weight, and they knew exactly the weight of each. The bars were all neatly sown up in canvas, and stowed in leather handbags, and deposited in a house close to the terminus in London, so that they might be handy when required.

At last the long-looked-for and eventful day arrived. It was in November, and Fred Ravel had ascertained that by the night mail on the 14th of the month an extraordinarily large quantity of bullion was to be conveyed to the Continent, and Ravel, senior, would be in charge of the train. Fleming and Gossett and his wife took first-class tickets, and they had a quantity of luggage, which they registered for Bordeaux, their tickets being for the same place, though of course they had no intention of proceeding to France at all. Their luggage consisted of easily-opened boxes, containing the bars of lead. The men had also provided themselves with wax tapers, sealing-wax, pincers, wedges, and nails. Being November, there were but few

passengers, and Ravel saw that the boxes of lead were so stowed in his van that they could be readily got at. He also took care that Fleming, Gossett, and Mrs. Gossett were put into the compartment of a carriage that was next to his van. And thus the whole plot was arranged with a care and skill that augured well for the success of the daring scheme. Soon after the train started Fleming and Gossett, who with Mrs. Gossett were the sole occupants of the compartment, got out of the carriage on to the footboard, and, at considerable risk, made their way to the guard's van, where they immediately set to work. With the keys that Gossett had fashioned, the iron bullion safe was opened, and a wooden box taken out. This was sealed, and in addition to being nailed it was secured with iron bands. Being provided with the necessary tools, and as Gossett was a practical mechanic, the lid portion of the bands was removed without damage to the bands themselves. Then the seals were broken, and by means of wooden wedges the lid was forced. While this was being done by Gossett, his companions, Fleming and Ravel, busied themselves with getting out the bars of lead from the luggage, and for every bar of gold removed a bar of lead was used to replace it. The gold having been abstracted, the box was carefully done up again, the seals replaced, and everything made to look as it was at first. Other boxes were then manipulated in the same way, and the stolen bars were placed in handbags, which had been provided for the purpose.

Although the work seems to have been done with great expedition, for Gossett was an expert, it occupied considerable time, but everything was completed and in order by time Dover was reached, and before then Fleming and Gossett had got back to their carriage,

where Mrs. Gossett, it may be supposed, was glad to see them again. At Dover they alighted, and removed the bags containing the gold from the guard's van, and, as showing the artfulness that was displayed throughout the business, they had provided themselves with tickets from London to Dover only, apart from those they had taken for Bordeaux. They thus avoided exciting suspicion by leaving the train at Dover. They all three drove in a cab with their precious plunder to Gossett's lodgings. Later on, when Ravel came home, his duties for the day being finished, his share of the swag was given to him, consisting of several bars of the gold, and he at once dug a hole in his cellar and buried them. The following day, Fleming returned to London by the South Eastern line, carrying some of the gold with him, and Gossett and his wife took train to Margate with their share, and obtained apartments there.

So skilfully had the robbery been planned and carried out, that the safe, when it was sealed at Dover, was found to tally pretty accurately with the consignment note ; it was weighed again at Boulogne, with the same result ; but when Paris was reached, and the cases were opened by the consignees, lo and behold, bars of lead were found where bars of gold ought to have been. The consternation of the officials may be imagined, and on every lip was the question, " On what part of the route has the robbery been committed? "

No time was lost in telegraphing all over the line, as well as to the consignors, and inquiries led to the discovery that at Dover and Boulogne the safe weighed a few pounds heavier than it had done in London ; and this seemed to point conclusively to the theft having taken place on the English side. As the loss represented

many thousands of pounds, extraordinary means were taken to try and get on the track of the thieves, for from the very first it was felt certain that more than one had been engaged in the transaction. The guard of the train, Ravel, in whose care the safe had been between London and Dover, was immediately arrested; but he emphatically asserted his innocence, and declared that he delivered the safe up as he got it; and as not a scrap of evidence was forthcoming against him he was released from custody. The faith of the Company in their old servant, however, seems to have been shaken, for they discharged him, although they assigned no grounds for so doing, and at the time a good deal of sympathy was shown for him. This sympathy took the practical shape of a public meeting in the town, at which something like a hundred pounds was subscribed and subsequently presented to him. A few weeks later he sold his furniture by auction, and quitted the place with his wife.

The failure to get evidence against the guard seemed to suggest that the robbery must have been committed on board the boat. It was a fearfully stormy night—very wet and very dark, and the steamer occupied an hour and a half longer than her usual time in crossing, so that the thieves had ample time at their disposal. But still, though the most searching inquiries were instituted, not a clue could be obtained, and it seemed highly probably that the affair would remain a mystery. How it was brought to light and the robbers laid by the heels is not the least interesting part of the story.

Notwithstanding the local sympathy that was displayed for the guard Ravel, my own feeling was that he must have been an accessory to the fact in some way or other. The difficulty, of course, had been to get

evidence against him. He had done nothing that could be construed into a suspicious circumstance, and the law could not hold him.

In suspecting him of being an accessory, it goes without saying that I was of opinion that the robbery had been committed on the English side of the Channel. On the other hand, Ravel's sympathizers maintained that either the Channel itself or the French side was the field of operations, and this formed the basis of their sympathy for the discharged guard. Careful investigation, however, proved beyond doubt that when the safe reached Dover it was a few pounds heavier than when it left London; while at Boulogne and Paris the weight was exactly the same as at Dover. This seemed to me to point conclusively to the safe having been tampered with on its journey from London to Dover, and the robbers had slightly overdone the leaden substitutes for the gold bars. Bearing these things in mind, I determined to keep an eye on Mr. Ravel, as there was one thing that made me particularly sanguine of being able to bring the rascals before a legal tribunal, and that was the fact of the gold being in bars. The ingenious robbery, to say nothing of the heavy value of the property stolen, had caused a great sensation throughout the country, and the police all over Europe had been notified. Besides this, a fairly large reward could be claimed by any one giving such information as would lead to the detection and conviction of the thieves. The difficulty, therefore, of disposing of the bars would be very great. I knew that if the robbers attempted to deal with a "fence" he would offer them so little for the gold that they would hardly be likely to accept it, for it was obvious they were not commonplace pilferers, but ingenious and clever rascals

with some capital at their disposal. Consequently, they would use every endeavour to realize the fullest possible amount on the plunder.

A careful consideration of all these points led me to infer that, instead of running the risk of trying to dispose of the gold in the original bars, the thieves would melt it, and sell it in small quantities. This melting involved a tedious and, for amateurs, a difficult process, for a very hot furnace, together with crucibles, ladles, tongs, etc., were required. Work of this kind would have to be performed in a very secret manner indeed in order to avoid arousing the suspicions of outsiders, and so there was the probability that, failing clues otherwise, the thieves would betray themselves by some incautious act.

My chief hope, however, was in Ravel, the guard, for I pinned my faith to the theory that he knew all about the robbery. I found that he had gone to live in a house in Hackney, in London, and close to Hackney Marsh. It was an old-fashioned two-storied house, in a dilapidated condition. It was detached, and stood in about half an acre of ground. It had formerly been a house of some pretensions, but was now fallen into decay, and was doomed to be pulled down sooner or later, as the estate upon which it stood was in the market. He had got the place on a yearly lease at a low rental. That, of course, might have been his inducement for taking it, apart from its situation, which was pleasant and airy. But I confess that it struck me that some other motive was at the bottom of it. His son, against whom of course no suspicion was entertained, still retained his employment under the railway company, and I found that he resided with his parents at Hackney. I ascertained—how, it need not

be told—that he was paying his addresses to a young woman who, with her brother, had formerly lived with his parents in Dover ; that the brother was a locksmith ; had been working in Dover, but gave up his work, and left when the Ravels left. Now, this struck me as being a somewhat curious, if not suspicious, circumstance ; and I asked myself if it was not exceedingly likely that Hill (as I was informed his name was) and his sister were confederates. Consequently, I became much interested in “Miss Hill,” and one evening I followed her and young Ravel from the house at Hackney to the Mansion House. They rode in a ’bus ; at the Mansion House they alighted, and were joined by a man, with whom young Ravel shook hands very cordially. The three then adjourned to a public-house in Lombard Street, where they remained some time. I also entered the house and watched them. They seemed to be very lively, and on good terms with themselves. The woman was very dark and good-looking, and seemed to me to be by no means lacking in self-assurance. In fact, her style and manner, no less than her conversation, led me to the conclusion that she was far from being a chicken, and knew her way about the world pretty well.

Presently the party left. Young Ravel got a Hackney ’bus at the Mansion House, and “his young woman” and the strange man—having seen him off—hailed a hansom cab. Ever on the alert for signs, I was particularly struck with this one. Who were these people that they could ride in a hansom cab ? I inferred, of course, that the man was Miss Hill’s brother, the locksmith. Now, people in their station did not often resort to hansom cabs as means of locomotion, but if they rode at all were usually content with

the humble 'bus. The significance of the circumstance I could not ignore, and so I followed them in another hansom. They drove east to Whitechapel, and presently alighted at the Three Tuns Tavern, where the cabman was paid and dismissed. Then they entered the public-house by the side door, and as they had not come out when an hour was gone, it seemed to me pretty conclusive evidence that they resided there.

The little incident that I had been a witness to that evening set me pondering, and I resolved to know something more about Miss Hill and her brother. In a few days, therefore, I had discovered that the Three Tuns public-house was rented by and licensed to William Jackson and Ernest Hill, but what was of extraordinary interest to me was the knowledge that I came to, that "Miss Hill" was the daughter of Mrs. Jackson. It was a startling discovery to say the least, and showed that there was deception being practised for some reason or other. But a few days later I had managed to get hold of a still more startling item, which was that Miss Hill and her pretended brother were man and wife—at any rate, they occupied the same chamber as such at the Three Tuns public-house. This pointed to one of two things, either that I had been misinformed with regard to young Ravel paying court to Miss Hill under the impression that she was Hill's sister, or he was being deceived in a very remarkable manner, and with a view to some deep design.

It will be seen clearly enough that if my suspicions had not so firmly attached themselves to Ravel senior, these circumstances would have had no interest for me. Indeed, I should not have known anything at all about them. As it was, I came to the conclusion that there was a good deal of mystery about these people that was

worth unravelling, and now I began to ask myself the question, "Was it not possible—nay, even probable, that young Ravel himself had had some hand in the robbery?"

This argues, of course, a keenly suspicious mind, ever on the alert for the slightest signs that will indicate the direction in which the wind blows. But a detective who has not such a mind can never hope to succeed in his profession. At any rate, I should have been wanting in the commonest instincts of the detective if I had failed to attach importance to the extraordinary particulars I gathered about these people. Nor was I the man to let the matter rest where it was.

"The great bullion robbery," as it had come to be called, had aroused the energies of some of the best detective officers in the country, and they were all working according to their own theories and ideas. Besides this, the offer of a reward had stimulated the alertness of hundreds, if not thousands, of lay people; and yet, though many weeks had slipped by since the commission of the crime, no one had got a clue. I had chosen my own course, as others had done theirs, and I believed in my own mind that I was on the right track; hence my dogged persistency. If I succeeded, I should have all the credit of the work. If I failed, I should be no worse off than many others. But so far my independent course had led me to a discovery that was strikingly suspicious, and, so far from my thinking I was on the wrong track, I began to feel I was on the eve of far more important discoveries.

My next step was to call upon Mr. Ravel at Hackney. He knew nothing of me; had never seen me as far as I knew, and perhaps I need scarcely remark I did not go to him now in my character of a detective. I found

that he kept no servant, and, as his wife—as I subsequently learned—was ill in bed, my knock at the door was responded to by himself. He was a delicate-looking, pale-faced man, and since I had seen him when he was before the magistrate on suspicion of having been concerned in the robbery he struck me as having taken on a very anxious and careworn expression. In order not to excite his suspicions at the outset if he had any guilty knowledge, I said—

“Your son is courting a young woman named Hill, I understand, and I want to speak to you on the subject in your son’s interest.”

I fancied that he eyed me furtively as he said curtly and gruffly—

“What is it you have to say?”

He did not ask me to go in, and, as I wanted to go in, I said—

“Perhaps we had better go into the house, as what I have to say is important.”

He showed a certain reluctance and hesitancy, and remarked—

“Well, I have nothing much to do with my son’s affairs. He is quite able to look after himself, so far as I know.”

“I should say that there you are entirely wrong,” was my answer. “Otherwise you would not have been deceived as he is deceived.”

The man’s curiosity was aroused now, and he said—

“Well, you had better come in for a few minutes.” And with that he led the way into a small parlour.

“Are you acquainted with my son?” he asked.

“Indirectly I am,” I answered, cautiously. “I suppose he is not in at present?”

"No."

"Has he been engaged to Miss Hill long?"

"Well—yes, some time."

"There is an engagement, I suppose?"

"Why, of course there is. They are to be married shortly."

"She poses in the character of sister to Ernest Hill?"

"Yes."

"Have you, as your son's father, ever made any inquiries about this Ernest Hill?"

"Well, I am quite satisfied that he and his sister are respectable people."

"Are you?" I remarked, sarcastically. "As you are satisfied on that point then, you will no doubt be astonished and shocked to be informed that Miss Hill is the wife or the mistress of the man who passes as her brother, and she is the daughter of Mrs. Jackson, whose husband keeps the Three Tuns public-house in the Whitechapel Road."

This announcement certainly did startle my listener. He grew paler, and the muscles of his face twitched with agitation.

"Good God!" he exclaimed, at last, "this will break the boy's heart if it's true."

"Oh, it's true enough," I remarked; "and now comes the question, Why has your son been made a tool of in this way?"

My revelation had shocked him, but my question now affected him in a different way. He seemed strangely agitated, and covered his face with his hands. As he showed no disposition to answer, I continued—

"I know that this man Hill and his so-called sister were your lodgers when you lived at Dover, and there

they passed as brother and sister. Yet, if I am correctly informed, your son made love to the woman, and the supposed brother encouraged it."

"How do you know that?" he asked, hoarsely.

"Never mind how I know it. I *do* know it. I repeat again, that they have made a tool of your son, and once more I ask, Why?"

His distress of mind was now painful to witness, and he moaned out—

"I cannot answer you."

"Well, now, will you do this, Mr. Ravel?" I remarked. "Will you arrange for me to meet your son here in your presence, and before you mention a word to him of what I have told you?"

After some hesitation he said—

"If you will tell me who you are, and what your interest in the lad is, I may do so."

I thereupon gave him my name, and told him my calling, which brought to his face a look of abject fear; and, pressing his head with his hands as if in pain, he exclaimed—

"I shall go mad if I have to bear this strain much longer."

"What strain?" I asked, as his words and action seemed to me to justify my suspicions about him.

For some time he paced up and down his room in a fearful state of agitation. Then suddenly he stopped and said—

"Come here, and I will show you something."

He left the room, and I followed him. Then he led the way to a garret at the top of the house. The room was filled with all the appliances for smelting gold. The floor was partly covered with

sheet iron, and on this stood a small furnace, the chimney passing through a hole in the roof. There were crucibles, ladles, moulds, and tools of various kinds. My feelings as I beheld these things and gathered their purport may be far better imagined than described.

“What does this mean?” I asked.

“It means that here we have been melting the gold that was stolen from the train on the night of the bullion robbery.”

“You were concerned in that robbery?” I said.

“Yes,” he answered, and then with a moan he fell heavily to the floor in a dead faint. I went to the top of the stairs, and exclaimed—

“Is any one in the house?”

This brought his wife up. She had risen from her bed, and was very ill; but she had heard the fall, and my question had alarmed her. Her distress was pitiable, but when she learned that her husband had made a confession, she drew a sigh of relief, and murmured—

“Thank God for it! I am sure this awful secret would soon have driven us both raving mad.”

We restored Ravel to consciousness, and got him downstairs; then circumstantially he told me the part that he had played in the affair, as I have related it in the first portion of this narrative, and he wound up by saying—

“I have been a weak, miserable tool in the hands of devils, but I will take all the consequences of my crime.”

I was glad to get away from the house, and I lost no time in making known my discovery, and applying for warrants for the arrest of Ravel and his son, Hill and

his "sister," and Jackson and his wife. The next day they were all arrested, except the elder Ravel. He had disappeared, and his wretched wife expressed strong fears that he had done something desperate. These fears were speedily confirmed by the finding of a man's mangled body on the North London Railway. The body was identified as Ravel's, and there is little doubt he had thrown himself in front of a passing train. But he had left in his wife's hands a sealed letter, which proved to be a written statement of the part he had played in the robbery, beginning from the time when Hill took up his residence with him at Dover. As may be imagined, young Ravel was furious when he discovered how he had been deceived. The elder Ravel in his written statement strongly urged his son to make "a clean breast" of all he knew. But without this paternal advice the young man would have done so in order to be revenged on the Hills, and he was not many hours in prison before he committed to writing his version of the story. When we came to search the Three Tuns public-house in quest of evidence, we found several of the bars of gold. We also came across documents, in the shape of letters and other papers, as well as the old lease of the public-house that "Jackson" had kept in Glasgow, which enabled us to find out some of his previous history, and to prove that his real name was Fleming. Inquiries pushed in Glasgow brought to light the facts concerning himself and Gossett and the two women as I have already related them. And there could be no question that they were a bad lot.

In due course they were brought up for trial, which extended over three days, and in spite of a most able and ingenious defence they were all convicted. Then

Fleming, in the hope of mitigating the severity of his sentence, told his version of the remarkable story, and also gave information which led to the recovery of a large sum of money—the proceeds of the robbery—which he had invested. His sentence, therefore, was the comparatively light one of five years' penal servitude. Gossett and his wife got twenty years each, for no extenuating circumstances could be found in her case. Mrs. Fleming, who was convicted of having been an accessory after the fact, got off with twelve months' hard labour; and young Ravel was dealt mercifully with by being allotted two years' hard labour. About one-half of the gold was recovered; the other half, representing a good many thousand pounds, had been melted down, and sold through the medium of a money-changer in the city, who was subsequently convicted of dealing with stolen property, knowing it to have been stolen.

Thus ended this remarkable affair, and I was heartily congratulated on having been instrumental in bringing the wretches to justice. Poor Mrs. Ravel did not long survive the disgrace that had fallen upon her husband and son, as she died six months after the latter's conviction.

A REMARKABLE WILL CASE.

ABOUT a generation ago there died in Edinburgh a Mr. Samuel James Bremner, leaving property behind him to the extent of something like £400,000. About £100,000 of this was in personal estate; the rest was invested in real estate, the greater portion of it being in England. At the time of his death Bremner was sixty-seven years of age; and a young wife whom he had married late in life had predeceased him by three years. This lady had borne him one child—a son, who was sixteen at the time of his father's death, and was studying at the Charterhouse Schools in London. Now, in order to make clear what follows it is necessary that I should tell in outline the story of Mr. Bremner's life, and a more romantic story it would be difficult to conceive.

Mr. Bremner was the son of a farmer in Midlothian, and was born in Edinburgh, but, quarrelling with his father for some reason or other, he ran away to sea, and for several years led a wandering life, until at last he settled down in the United States, and married a young widow named Cora Blaine, to whom he seems to have been very warmly attached. She bore him a son, who was christened Peter Rowe. Two years later, Bremner found that he had cause to be jealous of his wife, and under the easy divorce laws of the States he found no difficulty in freeing himself from the matrimonial bond. Very shortly after, the divorced woman married a sea

captain, who was possessed of money, and by him she had a son, upon whom was bestowed the somewhat curious names of Tristan Shadlock, his surname being Wandsgrove. Although Mr. Bremner had divorced himself from his wife, he seems to have very soon regretted it, and after she married again he kept up a friendship with her, and was received as a friend by Captain Wandsgrove. About six months after the birth of his son, Tristan Shadlock, Captain Wandsgrove was taken suddenly and alarmingly ill. He and his wife and friend, Bremner, had spent the evening at a theatre in Philadelphia; after that they supped together at a restaurant, consumed a quantity of drink, and the captain became affected by it. Bremner went home with the Wandsgroves, and more drink was partaken of. About three in the morning the captain was taken ill, and at eight he was dead. A doctor, who was called in, certified that he had died from apoplexy, the effects of a drunken debauch, and so he was buried. Three months later, Bremner re-married his divorced wife and widow of the deceased captain. But now a rumour began to spread that Captain Wandsgrove had not died a natural death, but had met with foul play. The rumour arose, it appears, through the gossip of a female servant, who had been in the Wandsgroves' employ. She stated to some one that she had heard Wandsgrove exclaim during the time he was rolling about in agony, that "they've poisoned me." And the woman vowed that Mrs. Wandsgrove had often said to her that if her husband would only die she would marry her former husband again, for he was the only man she had ever cared for.

On the strength of these statements, and other things, I presume an order was made for the exhumation of

Captain Wandsgrove's body. An examination proved that he had not died of apoplexy at all, and analysis revealed the presence of an immense quantity of sugar of lead, which in large quantities, I believe, produces symptoms analogous to apoplexy.

On the strength of this discovery, Bremner and his wife were arrested on a charge of murdering the captain. Few cases in the States had aroused so much interest for some time as this one did. The circumstance of the captain's wife having formerly been the wife of Bremner, who was her lover during the captain's life, and became her husband again after the captain's death, invested it with all the elements of a wild romance, such as our transatlantic cousins dearly love, or, for the matter of that, we cold-blooded Britishers love just as well. Public opinion was strongly against the prisoners, for it was considered so highly probable that the unfortunate husband had been done to death in order that the divorced man and woman might again marry, and more particularly from the fact that the captain left his widow a large sum of money. But notwithstanding that some of the ablest detectives of the United States were employed on the case, no legal evidence could be got to convict the prisoners, who were acquitted after an exhaustive trial.

On his acquittal, Bremner immediately commenced actions for damages for defamation of character against several papers which had not only condemned him and his wife before they were tried, but used very strong language in speaking of them. In all these actions Bremner was successful, and he got swinging damages in almost every case.

He and his wife and family, consisting of his own son and Bremner's son, now removed from Philadelphia,

and went to California, where they bought a ranch, which they seem to have conducted successfully for some years. But one day he and his wife had a desperate quarrel about something, and he struck her, whereupon she snatched up a revolver and fired at him. But the bullet missed its aim, and struck a servant instead who happened to be just behind her master. When the wretched Mrs. Bremner saw what she had done she immediately turned the weapon against her own breast, fired, and fell mortally wounded. As soon as he could after this tragedy Mr. Bremner sold his ranch, and with his two sons went to New York, where he placed his lads at school, and then started for India, and subsequently opened a boarding-house and restaurant in Calcutta, which seemed, like most of his transactions, to have been very successful, and he made more money. He grew tired of India, however, and, realizing his property, he sailed in a brig for Australia. The brig was wrecked, and Bremner and some of the crew managed to get on shore on a desert island, where they lived for two years, suffering horrible privations, until they were discovered by a ship bound for China, which took them off and landed them in Amoy. A Chinese rebellion was then in progress, and the city of Amoy was besieged by the rebels. Mr. Bremner's sympathies were with them, and he managed to get out of the city and join the rebel force; and though they were defeated in the end, they showed their gratitude to Bremner before the end came by loading him with riches—the proceeds of loot. Although a price was set upon his head by the Government, he managed to escape, and, making his way to Shanghai, he took passage in a ship that was sailing for London.

In London he opened an hotel, and soon afterwards brought his own and his step son from America. Peter Rowe Bremner, however, had shown a disposition to be wild, and this disposition strengthened in London, so that he and his father frequently quarrelled. At last the young man helped himself to a considerable sum of his father's money and bolted. The other lad, Tristan Shadlock, was a quiet, reserved youth, and his father placed him at a boarding-school at Brighton.

A year or so later, Mr. Bremner once more entered the bonds of wedlock by marrying his chief barmaid and book-keeper, and in due course she presented him with a son.

For the next dozen years Bremner led a humdrum life as compared with his former experiences, but all the time he was piling up money, for Mammon seems to have been his god.

Tristan had been indentured to a firm of attorneys in London, but after his apprenticeship was out, he threw up the law and took to the stage, for which he had long evinced a passion. This, however, gave great offence to his father, who cut him, and bestowed all his affections on his third son, who was a very promising lad, and was then at school.

And now Mrs. Bremner died, and her disconsolate husband—for we presume he was disconsolate—was seized with a sudden longing to return to his native town, Edinburgh, where, as he expressed himself, he wished to lay his bones. At this time he was about sixty-four years of age, and in feeble health; and he began to think about the disposal of his fortune at his death. With this end in view, he consulted the well-known firm of lawyers—Kinnaird, MacIntyre, &

Campbell. He made known his desire to these gentlemen to leave the bulk of his fortune to his son, James Ogilvie Bremner, by his last wife, with a legacy to Peter Rowe Bremner, who was then living in London, and about ten thousand pounds to Tristan Shadlock Bremner, who was attached to a touring theatrical company. The lawyers undertook to draft a will in accordance with the testator's wishes.

The will was drawn up and duly executed, and, much to the lawyers' surprise, Mr. Bremner insisted on taking it away with him. They tried to persuade him against this, but he was a headstrong and determined man, and they could not influence him.

Three months later, his son, Peter Rowe, was once more living with him. It appears that the old man felt lonely, and got a friend to hint that he would be welcome if he chose to return ; and as Peter at that time was in a state bordering on destitution, he was glad enough to take the hint.

Peter now seemed to get on very well with his father, and knew a great deal of his affairs, and in the course of a few months the old man went to his lawyers again ; told them that he had destroyed the first will, and wanted a new one drawn up, in which he would leave nothing to Tristan, but divide his fortune equally between his sons, Peter Rowe and James Ogilvie. The new will was duly prepared and attested, and Mr. Bremner carried it off with him.

At that time he had taken a house out near the Botanical Gardens, and had engaged a housekeeper to look after it. She was a buxom woman on the right side of forty, and it appears that the old man formed a strong attachment for her, and promised to marry her, a promise he would have probably fulfilled—for he was a

most obstinate man, and cared not a jot for public opinion—had he not discovered that his son had been making love to her. He at once discharged her from his employ, quarrelled with his son, and once more returned to his lawyer's, saying that he wanted a new will, in which he left everything to his son, James Ogilvie, with the exception of a thousand pounds each to Tristan and Peter, and he sent for Tristan to come and live with him; and, as the young man no doubt thought he would benefit at the old man's death, he was not slow in complying with the request, and in another month or two Mr. Bremner had taken his housekeeper back again.

This woman's name was Margaret Laurie. She was the widow of a commercial traveller who had been killed in an accident on the Caledonian Railway, and in an action the widow brought against the Company, she got three hundred pounds awarded for the loss of her husband.

She was a remarkably shrewd woman, with a great deal of natural intelligence, and with, no doubt, an eye to the main chance. She did not succeed, however, in trapping the old man into marrying her; probably because he could not forgive her for intriguing with his son.

One day Mr. Bremner met Mr. Kinnaird, the lawyer, in Prince's Street, and in the course of a conversation he made use of these words—

“I'm going to alter my will, as I want to leave something to yon housekeeper of mine.”

“Oh,” said Mr. Kinnaird, “you can do that by adding a codicil; and if you look into the office, we'll take your instructions in the matter.”

“Can I do it myself?” asked Bremner.

“Mr. Kinnaird told him that he could if he got it properly attested, but he advised him to have it done by a lawyer.

“But that means expense,” exclaimed Bremner.

“Well, of course, if you look at it in that way,” answered the lawyer. “But perhaps if you don’t have it done in a strictly legal way, it may lead to litigation after.”

“No fear,” said Bremner, “I’m not a fool. I haven’t knocked about the world the greater part of my life without learning a thing or two.”

“Very well,” said Kinnaird, “do as you like. It’s no business of mine.”

Some further conversation on the subject took place, when something that was said induced Mr. Kinnaird to ask his client if he did not intend to leave something to his son Peter. The mere mention of Peter’s name put the old man into a passion, and he exclaimed quite furiously—

“Not a d——d penny of my money shall he touch! He is a scoundrel. But I may leave a thousand or two more to Tristan if he behaves himself for the next year or so.”

Upon this the lawyer delicately hinted to his client that he should not delay for the next year or so; for life was an uncertain thing, especially to a man verging on seventy, as he was.

Mr. Bremner became very thoughtful; he never liked the idea of dying. But after some reflection he answered—

“Well, perhaps you are right. But I don’t think I’ll trouble you in the matter. I can manage the will myself, but not a penny—not a penny”—he strongly emphasized the repetition of “not a penny”—goes

to Peter. He's made his bed, and he can lie in it."

I have recorded this conversation as related to me with great circumstantiality by Mr. Kinnaird, because it has an important bearing on the rest of the story. Indeed, it is probable if it had not been for that conversation I should not have been brought upon the scene.

For about a year after that the lawyers saw nothing of their eccentric client, when one day news was brought to them that he had died, after a few days' illness, of congestion of the brain. In the last will they had prepared for him the senior partner of their firm had been appointed co-executor, with two other gentlemen—merchants—in Edinburgh, and as they held various property deeds, and other papers of his, they deemed it their duty to look into his affairs, and one of the partners called at the house of the deceased. His surprise may be imagined when the first person he met was none other than Peter Bremner. Of course the lawyer stated his business, and Peter said—

"Perhaps you are not aware that my father altered his will?"

"Well, I am aware that he had some intention of adding something to it."

"Oh, indeed; well, he has done a good deal more than that, for he has left the bulk of his property to me, my brother Tristan, and Mrs. Laurie, with a few thousands to James, who is at school."

"And do you know who the executors are?" asked the lawyer.

"Oh yes; they are myself, Tristan, Mrs. Laurie, and your head partner, Mr. Kinnaird."

When this news was conveyed back to the firm

there was general amazement; but after a time, when the members began to reflect on their late client's eccentricity and shiftiness, they thought it wasn't so strange after all.

When the funeral was over, and the will was produced, it was found to be a very short one, drawn up apparently in the deceased's own handwriting, and duly attested. It was dated nine months before the testator's death, and one of the signatories to it—an old gardener, who had looked after Bremner's Garden—had since died. The property, no matter of what nature, was to be equally shared between Tristan, Peter, and Mrs. Laurie, with the exception of six thousand pounds, which was invested in Peter and Tristan as trustees, for the benefit of James Ogilvie Bremner. He was to be kept at school until he was twenty-one, when the principal, with any interest that had accumulated, was to be paid over to him.

So far, all seemed right and square; the will was duly proved, and the ordinary procedure gone through by the co-executors. But something occurred which aroused Mr. Kinnaird's suspicions. Indeed, he had never been quite satisfied in his own mind that the testator, if he was *compos mentis* at the time he made the will, had intended to only leave six thousand pounds to James. He knew that this was the old man's favourite son, and he was in the habit of saying he would make a fine man of him. What could the boy have done to offend his father? For surely he must have been offended to only leave him a beggarly six thousand out of an estate valued in round figures at £400,000. On the face of it the thing seemed curious, and the more Mr. Kinnaird pondered upon it, the more suspicious he became. What he thought was that the

testator had been unduly coerced by his other sons and his housekeeper; and if this could be proved, the will of course could be contested. Another fact, too, that leaked out, and which served to strengthen the lawyer's doubts, was that Mrs. Laurie and Peter Bremner had actually been secretly married some time before the testator's death, and that two months after her marriage she gave birth to a girl, who was registered as "Jessie Rachel Bremner," the legitimate daughter of Peter Rowe Bremner, and his wife, Margaret Laurie Bremner.

The result was that, after grave consideration and consultation with his partners, Mr. Kinnaird sent me a request that I would call upon him. On my doing so, he told me all the circumstances as I have narrated them, and commissioned me to take steps to get such information as would justify the will being contested.

I saw that it was a difficult and delicate case, but I promised to do my best to unravel the mystery, if there was any mystery in it.

All the foregoing particulars, so far as they concerned the will, I committed to paper in narrative form, in order that I might dwell upon and study them. At this time nothing was known of Mr. Bremner's early life, and a question arose in the lawyer's mind as to whether Peter Rowe and Tristan Shadlock were legitimate children or not. It is true that the testator in his will described Tristan as "my stepson and the lawfully begotten child of Tristan Walter Wandsgrove, formerly a captain in the American merchant service, and of his wife, Cora Wandsgrove, *née* Blaine, afterward Bremner, from whom she was divorced, and whom she re-married on the death of Wandsgrove." So far as this went, it seemed as if Mr. Bremner had been very anxious to make it clear

who Tristan Shadlock Wandsgrove—although he was always called Bremner—was. As regards Peter Rowe, the old man was somewhat more ambiguous, for he referred to him as “my eldest son, Peter Rowe Bremner, born in Philadelphia, United States of America.” As it turned out, Peter had never been christened, but only registered. In order to comply with the requirements of the law, he had to produce a certificate of his birth, and he only succeeded in getting this after some delay.

Bearing in mind the fact of Mr. Bremner during his conversation with Mr. Kinnaird, the lawyer, in Prince’s Street, having so confidentially declared that he would leave not a penny to Peter, against whom he appeared to be peculiarly embittered, there seemed to be something fishy. The bitterness no doubt arose from jealousy, for the old man would not forgive Peter for intriguing with the housekeeper, Mrs. Lawrie. The grandfather of James Ogilvie Bremner—a Mr. Woodleigh—was in a good position as a provision merchant in the north of London, and he was exceedingly dissatisfied with the terms of the will, for he stated that his son-in-law had been passionately attached to James, and frequently said, in the presence of many witnesses, that this boy should be a rich man. The consequence was, after much consultation and deliberation, Mr. Woodleigh, the grandfather, resolved to contest the will on behalf of his grandson. But before taking any public action in the matter it was deemed advisable that I should first of all proceed to the United States and work up all the particulars I could about Peter Rowe and Tristan Shadlock, and afterwards try and strengthen our case by getting up evidence at home. It was evident to all concerned that the affair was likely to be long as well as very expensive; but, so far as the

expenses were concerned, Mr. Woodleigh gave a guarantee for them. I was urged, however, to use every possible despatch in fulfilling my commission, inasmuch as it seemed that Peter Rowe and his wife, as well as Tristan, had determined to get through the fortune with the greatest speed. They had all moved to London, and Peter and his wife had taken a large house in West Kensington, and kept quite an army of servants, as well as carriages and horses. Mrs. Bremner had provided herself with costly jewellery, and so far as dress was concerned, she seemed to vie with the highest ladies of the land. But, apart from this extravagance, which promised to soon dissipate the riches, her husband kept race-horses, and displayed a passion for the turf. Tristan, on his part, was no less ambitious of making a show. He had associated himself with a well-known actress, whose beauty had driven ever so many men wild. She was a divorced wife, and Tristan had taken her under his protection, stating that he had married her, though such was not the case. Beautiful she certainly was, but a more heartless or soul-less woman it would have been difficult to have found. Vulgar and coarse in her manner, her one aim in life seemed to be dress and jewellery and the homage of men.

In face of all these facts, it needed no prophet to predict that at no distant date there would be a financial crash amongst the Bremner family; and, whether they were legally entitled to the fortune or not, they would squander it. I therefore hurried off to the States, and in two months had succeeded in gathering up the particulars of Samuel Bremner's life, as I have given them at the beginning of this narrative. The work was rendered easy, because when Bremner was put

upon his trial for murder in Philadelphia, the lawyers worked up his history; and the tragedy on the ranch in California, when his wife shot her servant and then committed suicide, again brought him prominently into public notice.

Returning to England, I devoted myself in endeavouring to obtain such evidence as, from a legal point of view, might be considered good grounds for contesting the will. What I had learned in the United States was, of course, useless for that purpose. There was one great difficulty which every one interested in the matter recognized. It was well known to his lawyers that Mr. Bremner had made no less than three wills. In the first he left the bulk of his fortune to James Ogilvie Bremner. In the second the fortune was divided between James and Peter. Then came the third will, in which everything was left to James, with the exception of a thousand pounds each to Tristan and Peter. Now, it will be seen that in each of these wills James was always well provided for. But the difficulty was to prove the existence or the destruction of those wills. If they were in existence their production might in themselves have formed the grounds for an action, as tending to show that in his old age Bremner had been unduly influenced to leave his property as he did. I myself very clearly saw not only this difficulty, but many others that on the first blush appeared absolutely insurmountable. The suspicious elements, however, encouraged me, and I was still further encouraged when I discovered that after the last quarrel between Bremner and his son Peter—that was when the old man discovered that the son had been intriguing with the housekeeper—he never recognized him again. A month or so later he re-engaged the housekeeper, Mrs. Lawrie, but I

obtained the most reliable evidence to prove that he never forgave Peter, and never allowed him to enter the house again, and, up to the time of his death, always spoke about him in very bitter terms. This fact was very significant, and was rendered more important by Peter marrying the housekeeper secretly before the old man's death. Was it likely that Bremner—having regard for his well-known determination and obstinacy—would have left his property to Mrs. Lawrie and Peter if he had known they were married; or, indeed, if he had known that Mrs. Lawrie still kept up the acquaintance with Peter? Information was forthcoming that, up to the very hour of his fatal seizure, Bremner displayed great attachment for the housekeeper, and he had even been heard to say that if she was faithful to him, and gave up Peter, he would remember her in his will. How was it, then, that he came to leave so large an amount to Peter, as well as appointing him one of the executors? Even if that was really the case, did it not seem to argue undue influence? But the fact is, not a soul could be found who had ever heard him utter a word tending to show that he was reconciled to Peter. And then, to strengthen this, there was the recorded conversation between the testator and his lawyer, Mr. Kinnaird, when the mere mention of Peter's name made him angry, and he used forcible language when he declared that he would not leave him a penny.

Now, it will be remembered that Tristan Shadlock was indentured to a firm of lawyers in London, and a critical examination of the will showed that it had been drawn up in the most orthodox fashion, as regards the legal jargon and phraseology, and was apparently in the testator's own handwriting. One of the witnesses—a man named David Oliphant—had

been dead for some time. He was very old, and, long before his death, was almost blind, but it was conclusively proved that, so far as his signature was concerned, it was genuine.

The other witness was a person named James Stiven, who kept a small baker's shop. I found out that this man was in the habit of taking bread to the house. One evening in the winter, when he took the bread as usual, the door was opened by Tristan Shadlock, who was then living with his stepfather; and he asked him to go in, as he wished to speak to him. Mr. Stiven was taken to the kitchen, where there was a bottle of whisky on the table and some glasses. In a few minutes the housekeeper came in, and the conversation turned upon Mr. Bremner. Tristan said that his father was getting very feeble and crotchety, and that he had made a will, which, however, wanted proper attesting.

"It is a simple matter, you know," added Tristan. "As long as the will is not witnessed it is useless, but if you will add your name to it, it will be all right. I know where it is, and will get it."

This remark was not made until Mr. Stiven had been in the house for some time, and had partaken of sundry nips of whisky; and as he had a fatal weakness for whisky, he did not want much pressing, particularly as Mrs. Lawrie, with the blandest of smiles and the most persuasive eloquence, informed him that it would do him good, as it was a cold night. After a time Tristan laid a document before him and put a pen into his hand. Stiven had no idea of the contents of the document he was signing, and his signature was that of a man who was muddled with drink. Soon after he was dismissed. Ten pounds were put into his hands by Tristan, who cautioned him to keep his own counsel, and said that

twenty pounds more would be given to him on the death of "old Bremner."

This little episode, which I learned by the exercise of some diplomacy, was a revelation, and left us no room to doubt that there was something wrong. Even on such evidence as we had up to this time collected, an action might have been commenced, but it was deemed advisable to still further strengthen our position if possible. With a view to this end, I obtained an introduction to Tristan, not in my professional character, of course, but as a theatrical manager from Australia, and who was somewhat down on his luck. This character was assumed because Tristan had a great weakness for the stage and theatrical people.

I soon managed to ingratiate myself in his favour. I found him an easy-going sort of a fellow, fond of the flesh pots of Egypt, and "a babbler in his cups." He drank wine in large quantities, and when he had muddled himself therewith he was much given to maudlin sentiment. I found also that the relations between him and his wife—as I supposed her to be then—were not of that cordial character which is conducive to peace and goodwill in a household. On the contrary, they quarrelled like cat and dog.

One night I was dining at the house. About a dozen people were present, and they made up a very motley party indeed. There were a horse trainer, a jockey, two or three turfites, a theatrical agent, and several actors and actresses. There was a very lavish supply of wine, and Tristan drank not wisely but too well. Towards midnight he and his lady love quarrelled, and in the heat of an altercation he hurled a wine-decanter at her head. Fortunately, it missed its aim, ut went through a valuable mirror, which it shattered

to atoms. Mrs. Bremner became so excited and hysterical that I — having acquired considerable influence over them both—persuaded her to accompany me to another room, hoping that I should be able to pacify her. She did as I desired, but she was very angry, and threatened all sorts of dire things.

“Come, come,” I said, “you should not talk like that, for after all, you know, he is your husband.”

“My husband!” she shrieked, with an expression of the most withering scorn—“my husband! thank God he is not that, and never will be, and after this night’s work I’ll clear out.”

“Well, that might not be a wise course,” I ventured to suggest, “for you would have no claim upon him, so that the laugh would be upon his side.”

“No claim upon him!” she echoed, laughing bitterly, “that is all you know. He will have to come down pretty handsomely, I tell you, or he will find himself in the wrong box.”

“What do you mean?” I asked.

“Oh, never mind what I mean. But look here, I’ve got him under my thumb like that”—— as she spoke she placed her thumb on the table, illustrative of what she meant, and she added—“and I’ll crush him as I would a fly.”

I was all alert now. It is true she was highly excited, and a woman of her temperament when in that condition is apt to say things and utter threats that are mere words; but there was something in her manner that gave me the impression that she really had some power over him, and, naturally, I began to ask myself what it might be.

“You know some secret, perhaps, that it would not do to disclose?” I remarked.

"You bet I do," she answered, with a toss of her head. "If I liked to open my mouth, I could get him penal servitude for life."

These significant words, it may be safely assumed, did not fall on barren soil. I weighed them well, and, knowing what I did, they were like a hand writing on the wall. I felt that it would not do to let her passion pass away, or her temper cool down, until I had learnt more, and I resolved to probe her while she yet smarted from his brutality. So I said—

"If your knowledge is capable of doing that, it must be very terrible. Has he committed murder?"

"No, not that I know of." She was standing by the fireplace, one foot on the fender, her right elbow on the mantelpiece, her left hand hanging down by her side with a handkerchief in it. She was biting her nether lip, her breast was heaving, her eyes were red with weeping. She was the very incarnation of anger and bitterness. I understood her mood perfectly, and, leaning towards her—for I was standing near her—I said in lowered tones—

"If not murder, perhaps he has forged a will?"

The effect of these words was magical. She seemed to undergo an instant change. Her flushed face turned deadly pale, and, clasping her hands together with the violent energy of a nervous fear, she exclaimed hoarsely—

"What do you know about it? What do you mean? Has he ever told you?"

"No," I answered, "he has not told me. But it is true, is it not?"

"Oh, my God, don't betray him!" she cried, with that inconsistency peculiar to some women. Here she fell at my feet, and put her hands up imploringly. "Don't

mention a word of it, for heaven's sake! You know he's all right when he's sober, and would lay his life down for me, and I love the very ground he walks upon."

I got her on to her feet, and led her to a sofa.

"Tell me," I said, "how did you learn this secret?"

She was weeping hysterically again, and had covered her eyes with her handkerchief, but she sobbed out—

"His brother and his wife were here one night, and they quarrelled about some money matters, and in his anger Tristan said if they were not careful he would blow the whole gaff about the will."

At this moment the door opened, and two of the female guests came in. I handed the lady over to their care, and got away from the house as soon as possible, feeling almost as if I had just wakened up from some strange dream. Of course, I was not forgetful that the woman might retract her statement, or swear that she never said anything of the kind; but I knew that the law had ways and means of worming out the truth when once it had got a foundation to go upon. I therefore lost no time in reporting what I had heard, and it was decided that the time for action had arrived.

The case was tried in London, and the leading counsel on our side was one of the ablest Q.C.s at the bar, and he was supported by a host of juniors. The grounds of action were that the will had been obtained by undue influence, or by collusion and fraud; otherwise, that the will was an entire forgery, and that the testator never intended to disinherit his son by his last wife. The ground was thus pretty well covered, so as to leave no technical flaw.

The will itself was subject to the most critical

examination by experts, who discovered by means of the microscope that some of the writing, if not all, had been originally traced very faintly in pencil, which was clearly discernible in places beneath the ink. Now, it was not at all likely that Bremner would have written his will first of all in pencil, and then have written in ink over that. He might have drafted it to begin with, and have copied it afterwards. But it was an outrage on common sense to suppose that he would have written over pencil-marks. Apart from this, however, the experts, on comparing the testator's signature with a great many letters of his that were procured, unhesitatingly pronounced it a forgery.

Of course, the onus of the proof of this rested with the prosecution, and might have led to interminable litigation, but Peter Bremner and his wife fled the country, taking their child with them. They realized as much money as possible before leaving, and it was found that they had gone to Spain. So secretly had they managed their departure, that it was not known until they were beyond the reach of the law.

When Tristan Shadlock heard that they had deserted him he became furious, and, prompted no doubt partly by revenge and partly in the hope that he would save himself, he committed a confession to writing, the substance of which was as follows :—

Mrs. Lawrie, when living with Bremner, knew of his last will, in which he left everything to his son, James Ogilvie. She told him that she thought it was very unfair not to give her something, and he promised that he would speak to his lawyer about it. Subsequently he told her that he was going to add a codicil in her favour, but he did not do so, and she became exasperated, especially as she was married to Peter, who was

not allowed to enter the house. One day she told Tristan that he and his brother Peter were only to get a thousand each, and she asked him if he was going to stand that. He said that he couldn't help himself, and she replied, "Yes, you can. You've been a lawyer, and know how to draw up a will. Why not make one in favour of yourself and of me and my husband?" The result of this conversation was, the three of them entered into a conspiracy. Tristan practised the old man's handwriting until he was able to imitate it quite well. Then the will was prepared, and they got it duly executed. For appearance' sake, they gave James Ogilvie ten thousand pounds, and made Kinnaird one of the trustees, which proved to them a fatal mistake. The original will was supposed to have been destroyed, but Tristan had retained it, and now produced it; and under this will, of course, James Ogilvie Bremner became the heir.

Such was the remarkable and startling story as told by the wretched prisoner, who seemed to have more conscience than his co-partners in guilt, and so far as he could he made restitution of the money he had acquired. In view of this, he got off with the comparatively light sentence, for so serious an offence, of ten years' penal servitude. As Peter had taken possession of a great deal of his father's real estate, besides which he had purchased property, this was seized by order of the Court of Chancery. Large sums of money had, of course, been ruthlessly squandered, but in the end young James Ogilvie succeeded to a fortune of about two hundred thousand pounds. This represented little more than half of Mr. Bremner's fortune at the time of his death. But, as showing the reckless way in which the other had been squandered

by the wretches who had possessed themselves of it, it was proved that in the course of one season Peter had lost upwards of thirty thousand in horse-racing.

Neither he nor his wife, unfortunately, were ever taken, and so they escaped punishment in this world for their crime, and Tristan Shadlock did not live to complete his term, as he died in prison about three years before the expiration of his sentence.

THE MYSTERY OF GRIMOND'S BUILDINGS.

ONE fearfully cold and bitter Christmas morning, when the bells were supposed to be ringing out the sentiment, "Peace on earth; goodwill towards men," I received an urgent message from the authorities to investigate what on the face of it seemed to be a case of murder. As the murderer does not choose any particular season for the exercise of his art, the detective, like a doctor, is liable to be called upon at any moment, and as one of the first principles of an earnest man is devotion to duty, no complaint should or can be made. I therefore obeyed the summons, though I had to tear myself away from the comforts of home and the pleasures of a family party.

The scene was London, and up to the arrival of the message I had not opened my *Times*, but, doing so now, I came across the following brief paragraph:—

"Last night a horrible discovery was made by some tramps who had taken shelter from the storm in an uninhabited and half-ruined house known as Grimond's Buildings, situated in Rupert Street, Marylebone Road. On affecting an entrance into the premises by means of a broken window, the tramps were sickened by an offensive and peculiar smell, which they at first attributed to dead rats or cats. One of the men being provided with a piece of candle, instituted a search, with the result that he came across the body of a woman in a shocking

state of decomposition, lying in one of the upper rooms. Information was at once given to the police, who took charge of the premises. It is supposed the unfortunate woman had got into the place for the sake of shelter, and had died from illness or exhaustion."

Now, the message that I had received gave me the address—Grimond's Buildings, so that the paragraph, of course, had a special interest for me, and I lost no time in making my way out to Rupert Street, Marylebone. At that period Rupert Street—the name has since been changed—was a short thoroughfare, containing two or three shops, a few dwelling-houses, a coal-yard, and a timber-yard. At one end of the street was a piece of land of about an acre and a quarter in extent. On one corner of this plot stood a large house known as "Grimond's Buildings." The basement had formerly been used as an oil and colour shop, but I was given to understand that the place had been untenanted for four or five years. The rest of the land had been fenced in, but the fence was rotten and broken down, and the plot was a howling wilderness of rotting rubbish; while a shattered board had borne the announcement, "This land for sale." The letters, however, were now all but entirely obliterated.

Grimond's Buildings was a melancholy spectacle of wreck and ruin. There was not a whole window in the place, and the external woodwork was all falling to decay.

I found that the paragraph in the *Times* was correct so far as the finding of the body was concerned. Two men, two women, and a child—homeless, starving wanderers in the great world of London—had removed a shutter at the back part of the basement of the house, and had crept in for shelter and rest. On discovering the body, they at once reported the circumstance to the

nearest police-station. Soon afterwards the divisional surgeon made a brief examination of the body, which was lying face downwards, and he found unmistakable evidence about the throat and in the appearance of the face, which was fairly well preserved, that the woman had died of strangulation. Brutal force and ferocity had been displayed, for the poor creature's throat was torn and abraded, and there were the marks of fingers and thumbs which had been pressed deeply into the flesh. The eyes were protruding, and so was the tongue.

She was a young woman, considerably under thirty, probably not more than one- or two-and-twenty, and had been pretty. She had good teeth, blue eyes, and fair hair. All her clothes were good of their kind, and it soon became manifest that robbery had not been the motive of the murder, for she wore a small gold watch and chain, a gold brooch, and a locket that contained some rather coarse, reddish hair, and engraved on the face of the locket was, "From dear Joe." In her dress-pocket was a purse containing one sovereign and some loose silver. She also wore a wedding ring and keeper, and there was evidence that she would ultimately have become a mother. Her hands were rather large, with coarse-grained skin, and broken, scratched nails, showing that she had been in the habit of doing rough work. Death had taken place from five to six weeks before the discovery of the body.

Now, here were all the elements of a startling mystery, and, since robbery had not been the motive of the crime, it was necessary to find out who had had an interest in bringing about her death. There were no papers or letters of any kind about her person which would have led to identification, but when the body was lifted, the half of a plain gold shirt-sleeve stud was found adhering

to the collar of her dress, where it had evidently caught and been wrenched off in the struggle. The stud was oval in shape. It was of eighteen-carat gold, and pretty heavy, while on the face of it was engraved the letter "J." On searching the house, the other half of the stud was found on the stairs; the room in which the body was lying was on the second floor. The inference, therefore, was that after the murderer had finished his fiendish work he unconsciously dropped the half of the stud as he descended the stairs. Of course I took possession of the two halves of the broken stud, hoping that they might afford a clue; and I also took the locket containing the hair.

It was now very certain that we had to deal with one of those mysterious crimes which every now and then startle London; and, having regard to the length of time the woman had been dead, the murderer had had plenty of time to get clear out of the country, if he had made good use of his opportunity.

Grimond's Buildings had originally been built by a Mr. Grimond, a native of Glasgow, who had emigrated to London and established himself as a grocer. He bought the freehold of the land, and erected the buildings about fifty years before the murder. He was a married man, but had no children, and his wife predeceased him. At his death he left the property to his brother, Joseph Grimond, who was also a grocer in London. Twenty years or so later, Joseph Grimond died suddenly and intestate, leaving a young family by a second wife, and a son aged eighteen by his first wife. The second wife, on behalf of her son, aged ten, put in a claim for the property, on the grounds that the stepson was illegitimate. This, of course, gave the legal vultures profitable and agreeable work, and as it seemed

likely that in their wranglings and squabbings they would gobble up everything there was to gobble, leaving the heir, whoever he might prove to be, nothing but a formidable bill of costs, the property was thrown into Chancery. In law, Joseph Grimond, the son by the first wife, was the heir, providing he could prove legitimacy. But that appeared at the time to be a difficulty. His father was given to periodical drinking bouts, during which he would absent himself from his home for weeks together.

On one occasion, after one of these bouts, he returned with a young woman, whom he represented as his wife; but being naturally a reserved and reticent man, he would satisfy nobody's curiosity as to where he had met his wife, or when he had married her. None of his friends were aware even that he had been courting. Sometime later his wife gave birth to a son. Five years after that she died, and the son was sent to Glasgow and brought up by the paternal grandmother. But neither she nor any one else knew where the lad's father had been married, and so for a long time after the father's death it did seem as if proof of the marriage would not be forthcoming, in which case the property would have gone to the eldest son of the first wife. But, at last, Joseph, or those acting for him, discovered by some chance or other that his father at the time he disappeared from home on that memorable occasion when he brought back a wife had gone to Newcastle, where he stayed with a friend. His friend had a servant, with whom Grimond fell desperately in love at first sight, and after a very brief courtship married her by license at Newcastle, and took her back to London with him. This being clearly established, Joseph Grimond succeeded to the property, which, at the time, was

quadruple the value originally paid for it, as land had increased in value enormously in that part of London.

It was naturally thought that Joseph, who was now twenty-five, would put his property in order as soon as he became master of it, or else realize it. But he did nothing of the sort. He did at first obtain some estimates as to what it would cost to renovate Grimond's Buildings, but beyond that he did nothing; and, of course, the curious busy-bodies, who are always more interested in other folks' affairs than in their own, were greatly exercised in their minds to account for conduct so extraordinary. But it appears that he had also inherited from another source—that is, from an aunt who had become greatly attached to him when he was under his grandmother's care—several thousand pounds, so that he was not pressed for money, and his London lawyers informed me that it was his intention to keep the property as it was for a time, as it was expected to still further increase in value, owing to some extensive improvements that were being carried out in the neighbourhood by the Metropolitan Board of Works.

Such was the history of Grimond's Buildings, which had now gained an unenviable notoriety by the mysterious crime that had thrown its dark shadow over the place—a crime that seemed as if it would have to rank amongst the undiscovered ones of London, which may be numbered, unfortunately, by scores. Of course, the body was photographed, and this and a full description of the clothing and other things were circulated throughout the kingdom, but without any result. I confess that I was not much surprised at that, because the face had undergone such alteration by distortion and death that however intimate a person might have been with her in life, he would have found

great difficulty in recognizing her by this *post-mortem* photo. I should mention that in the circulated particulars no mention was made of the broken link or stud that had been found in the house. The omission was owing to my special request, and my object may be easily divined. It was not difficult to determine that the man who committed the crime—for there was the strongest possible reason for thinking it was a man—was wearing a shirt that was fastened at the wrists with gold links. In depriving the woman of her life, there must have been some struggle, for the victim was hardly likely to have been passive during the time that the life was being strangled out of her. In the struggle one of the links had caught in some bead-trimming round the neck of her dress, and the broken part of the shank had clung there. It was safe to say as an absolute certainty that the villain knew nothing at all about this fact. Of course, he would subsequently miss the link, but be unable to determine where he had lost it. And as the fellow one to it would be of some value, he was not likely to throw it away or destroy it, although he would certainly have done so had he known that he had left the other one behind him in Grimond's Buildings. There was another deduction, too, to be made from the finding of the broken link, which was that the criminal did not belong to the lower orders, who are not, as a rule, given to wearing costly gold sleeve-links, and consequently I cherished the belief that ultimately that broken sleeve-link would put me on the track of the murderer.

There was one other feature in the case that set me pondering a good deal. How was it the woman had been lured into the house? And how did she and her

slayer gain entrance? The tramps who had discovered the body confessed that they had pulled down some of the rotten woodwork of a window in order to get into the house; but there was no evidence that the woman and the man who killed her resorted to similar means. There were two door entrances to the premises—one in the front, which gave access to the shop; and the other at the back. Through one of these doorways they must have passed; and the back being less public than the front, that was the one probably that was used. If this theory was correct, it followed that a key must have been used to open the door with, because both doors were intact, and the locks had not been tampered with in any way. This fact was very significant—at least to me it was so. And its significance was this. The murderer must have been well acquainted with the premises, and been in possession of a key.

I learnt from the agents—a firm of auctioneers and valuers in Oxford Street—that they had a key, but had had no occasion to use it for a long time; and they were not aware that it had ever been out of their possession to any one they did not know. To every key in their charge a bone label was attached, and the label bore a number and a private mark of the firm. And all keys were kept in a safe.

My next step was to seek an interview with the owner of the property, Mr. Joseph Grimond, who resided permanently in Glasgow. But I was informed that he was abroad. He had been recently married, and had gone to America with his wife.

This was unfortunate, because he presumably would have a key of his own property; and was it not possible that some one connected with him in some way had got possession of it? This may seem a far-fetched theory,

but my experience in dealing with criminals is, that far-fetched theories are often very near the truth.

So far, then, I had failed to get any definite clue that would lead to the solution of what had now become known as "The Mystery of Grimond's Buildings." The body of the unfortunate woman had been buried at the expense of the parish, but we had retained her clothing, her jewellery, and a long tress of her hair. Amongst her clothing was a brand-new corset of crimson sateen. It bore the trade mark of a big firm of London manufacturers; but, apart from this, it also bore the name and address of the seller, a draper not far from the Elephant and Castle in South London.

In order not to leave any stone unturned, I went to this shop to see if any of the people remembered selling the corset. After a good deal of inquiry, a young woman in the ladies' department stated that about two months before—that would be just before the murder—she had sold a pair of corsets, some stockings, and underlinen to a young woman, and she believed the corset I showed her was the one she then sold. The parcel had been sent by the purchaser's request to Mrs. Thornton, and the address was in a street out of the Old Kent Road.

"Do you remember," I asked, "if the purchaser bought the things for herself?"

"Oh yes; because she rejected two or three articles we showed her on the score that they wouldn't fit her."

"Did you note if she had a wedding ring on?"

"Yes, I saw that she had a wedding ring and a keeper on."

"Can you describe her appearance?"

"Well, she was rather pretty, with a fresh complexion."

"What was the colour of her hair?"

"A lightish, rather a yellow, brown."

"And her eyes?"

"They were blue."

"Was she an educated woman, do you think?"

"I should say not, by the way she spoke."

"To what class of society do you suppose she belonged?"

"Well, she struck me as being a superior sort of servant who was putting on airs."

"What do you mean by a superior sort of servant?"

"Why, she might have been a chambermaid, a waitress, or a nurserymaid, or something like that."

"What gave you the impression that she was a servant?"

"She was so finnickish, and gave herself so many airs, and acted in a way that no well-bred person would."

"Was there any one thing in particular that caused her to be impressed on your mind?"

"Yes, she was here for a long time, and gave me a good deal of trouble. She looked at a great many things that she had no intention of buying, and she seemed to hanker after costly things that were evidently beyond her means."

"So that your attention was drawn to her in a way that otherwise it would not have been?"

"Yes; and after all the things were sent home she came back in a day or two and exchanged some of them for more expensive articles, which she had admired at the time, but seemed unable to make up her mind whether she would take them or not."

"And you never saw her after that?"

"No."

“Do you think you could recognize her from a photograph?”

“Possibly I might.”

“Tell me,” I said, as I showed her the photograph of the dead woman, “if you think that was the person you sold the articles to?”

She was a little startled at first, but examined the photograph critically, and at last expressed an opinion that it certainly resembled the customer.

I began to feel now as if I were getting hold of a thread that might subsequently lead to the unraveling of the mystery.

My next step was to go to the address out of the Old Kent Road where the parcel of goods had been sent to. I found that the tenant of the house was a Mr. Tomlinson, who was a grocer's assistant, and was employed in the city. As he had only two children, his wife took lodgers, and for a short time a young woman, giving her name as Mrs. Thornton, had occupied a bed-room and sitting-room in the house. The description of Mrs. Thornton given by the landlady corresponded with that given by the assistant in the draper's shop; and when I showed Mrs. Tomlinson the photograph of the murdered woman, she also recognized it—or thought she did—as her former lodger, who had lived in the house five weeks. She was evidently a stranger to London, and told her landlady that she came from Glasgow, and that her husband was in a good position. But they were obliged to live apart for a time, as her husband had reasons for not wishing his friends to know that he was married.

“Was she ever visited by her husband, do you know?” I asked.

“Not that I am aware of.”

“Or by any gentleman?”

“No, I don’t think so. But she used to go out a great deal, and a young woman came several times to see her. She told me she had come to live in this neighbourhood because she had a married friend who kept a shop in the Walworth Road.”

Unfortunately, Mrs. Tomlinson had never heard the name of this friend in the Walworth Road. But still, I hoped to be able to trace the friend out, even if it necessitated visiting every shop in the road, which is a pretty long one. It appeared that Mrs. Thornton had suddenly left her lodging, paying a week’s rent in lieu of a week’s notice, because, as she said, she was going to join her husband in Manchester. Mrs. Tomlinson was also of opinion that her lodger had at one time been a servant, from the way she talked. She spoke with a Scotch accent, and was not well educated.

I felt pretty sure now that Mrs. Thornton was the woman who had been found murdered in Grimond’s Buildings; but though I had learned this much, it rather tended to increase the mystery. If it was true that she had gone to Manchester, it was obvious that she must have returned to London within a few days. Now, if it *was* true that she went to Manchester, why did she go? Why did she come back to London? And how was it she went to Grimond’s Buildings? These questions may not seem very intelligible, but I will show that they began to suggest to me a theory, which I was determined to work upon, and which ultimately enabled me to unravel the mystery.

My first step was to endeavour to find out who Mrs. Thornton’s friend was, who was supposed to keep a shop in the Walworth Road. Now, as every one knows who is acquainted with London, Walworth Road is a very

long thoroughfare with innumerable shops, so that it was in the nature of a forlorn hope to set out on an errand of inquiry of the kind without a clue. However, perseverance and system do a great deal, and as Mrs. Thornton's landlady had stated that her lodger was Scotch, I searched the section of the directory referring to Walworth Road to see if there was a Scotch name in the list; for it seemed probable that, as Mrs. Thornton had gone to live near Walworth for no other reason than that she had a friend in the neighbourhood, the friend might be from her own part of the country. At any rate, the idea was worth acting on, and I discovered in the directory the name of James Buchanan, who kept a tobacconist's shop, so I lost no time in waiting upon him; but he had never heard of Mrs. Thornton, and consequently could give me no information, though he told me that lower down the road was a small draper's shop kept by a Mr. George Ratcliffe, whose wife was a Scotch woman and came from Glasgow. Of course, I went at once to Mr. Ratcliffe, but my inquiry as to whether he knew a Mrs. Thornton was met with a decisive "No."

This was discouraging, but it suddenly occurred to me that Thornton was possibly an assumed name, and that the unfortunate woman had had some potent reason for concealing her identity, so I said—

"Your wife, I understand, comes from Scotland?"

"Yes; she is a native of Glasgow."

"Would you allow me to see her?"

"Oh, certainly."

And Mr. Ratcliffe took me into a little back parlour, where I was introduced to his wife, a somewhat vulgar-looking young woman, whose appearance somehow was suggestive of the domestic servant.

"You never knew a Mrs. Thornton?" I began.

"No; I never heard of such a person."

"Were you ever acquainted with a young woman who came from Glasgow, and who lived for a time with a Mrs. Tomlinson in a street off the Old Kent Road?"

"Oh yes; but her name wasn't Thornton."

"What was it?"

"Well, she and me was in service together in an hotel in Glasgow, and then she was called Bella Robertson. But when she came to see me here she said she had been married, and that her name was Guthrie."

"Were you well acquainted with her?"

"Yes, pretty well."

"Do you happen to have a photograph of her?"

"No."

"Would you say that was the person you knew as Mrs. Guthrie?" Here I showed her the photograph of the murdered woman, and the effect was to cause Mrs. Ratcliffe to become faint; for, in spite of the ghastly look of the dead woman's face, she recognized her.

"Yes," she stammered forth, "that is her. But that has been taken after death."

"Yes. That represents the person who was found murdered in Grimond's Buildings."

This announcement caused Mrs. Ratcliffe to weep bitterly, and she moaned out, "Poor Bella! poor Bella!"

When she had calmed down a little I said—

"Now, I am trying to bring the murderer of this young woman to justice, so I hope you will give me all the information you can about your friend."

"Well, there was something very strange about her when she came here, but she told me she had married a

rich man, though for a time the marriage would have to be kept very dark, as there were reasons for not letting her husband's friends know that he was married. Of course, I asked her a lot of questions, but she would not tell me anything. We were never particularly friendly, but she knew I was married and living here; and when she called on me, she said she was so glad to know somebody in London who came from her native place, as she felt so dull."

"Was she not living with her husband then?"

"No. She told me that they could not live together for a time, and that he was away. One day she called, and wanted me to go shopping with her. But I couldn't get out, as I had no servant at the time. She said that her husband had sent her some money, and she expected she would have to go to Manchester to meet him. I asked her if he lived in Manchester, and she said no, but was only there on business. She made some small purchases in our shop, and went away. I only saw her two or three times after that, and I felt rather offended that she did not come to wish us good-bye, for me and my husband treated her very kindly. Of course, I had no idea that the woman murdered in Grimond's Buildings was poor Bella, or I should have come forward and given what information I could long before now."

After this interview with Mrs. Ratcliffe I felt pretty sure that I should be able ultimately to unravel the mystery. It was clear that the murdered woman had concealed much from her friend, and it was remarkable that she represented herself to her as Mrs. Guthrie, while in her lodgings she passed as Mrs. Thornton. There must have been some deep motive for that; but still, with the clue that I now had in my hands, I was hopeful, and the theory I worked out was this:—

Firstly, the person who murdered her was her husband, or the man who passed as such.

Secondly, he had induced her to go to Manchester, and had then brought her back to London for the sake of destroying traces of her.

Thirdly, the person who murdered her was well acquainted with Grimond's Buildings, and must have been in possession of a key or some other means of opening the door. This seemed to me so feasible that I regarded it as a matter of absolute certainty, for, saving that the murderer had been well acquainted with the place, and had free access to it, why did he select it for his crime? Then, again, as the woman had not been robbed, robbery was not the motive. What was? Revenge?—Possibly. Jealousy?—Possibly again. But *probably* it was that the husband was desirous of getting rid of her. The woman had told her friend that she had married a rich man, but would not give any particulars of her marriage. Now, women are usually very fond of talking about such things, and take a delight in imparting all the details in confidence to a friend, who in turn imparts them, in strict confidence of course, to some other friend. But in this case, Mrs. Guthrie—or Thornton, or whatever her name was—had some peculiar reason for keeping her secret to herself. Therefore, I argued that she, being a pretty woman, had attracted the attention of some young fellow socially far above her. He had married her, probably clandestinely, but tiring of her, or having some more powerful reason for getting her out of the way, had decoyed her to the empty house and there strangled her to death.

Such was the line of reasoning I pursued for my own guidance, and I proceeded to act upon it. My first step

was to go to Glasgow and make inquiries of the people who kept the hotel where the woman had been in service. I found that she had been known there as Ellen Cox. She was considered to be very good-looking, and was vain, coquettish, and given to flirtation. She left the hotel ostensibly to get married, but did not tell any one where she was going to be married, nor whom she was going to marry. I discovered that she had a mother and father, a brother and two sisters, living. She had quarrelled with them all, because, having displayed a good deal of jewellery and finery, they naturally were anxious to know how she became possessed of such things. As she declined to tell them, beyond saying her "sweetheart, who was a gentleman," had given them to her, it led to unpleasantness, and she left her home. A short time afterwards they had a letter from her simply dated London, in which she said she was very happy and was married, and she asked them to write to her, addressed to the Post Office, to be called for. Her friends did that, and a few months later she wrote again, saying that she would probably be in Glasgow on a certain date. However, she never went, but a few weeks later sent them a hurried note from Manchester, giving her address at an hotel in the London Road in that town. Of course, the poor people were inexpressibly shocked to hear that she had been murdered.

From Glasgow I went straight to Manchester. I found the place which Mrs. Guthrie had given as her address was a temperance house, and the people remembered that a woman answering her description had stayed there for a few days in the name of Guthrie. While there, she was visited once or twice by a gentleman, but, unfortunately, no one in the place seemed

able to give any description of him, with the exception of a waitress, who said she remembered that the man had reddish hair, and she had heard the woman call him "Joe."

These two little facts, slight as they were, were important, for the gold locket found on the dead woman's body contained some coarse reddish hair, and on the face of the trinket was engraved, "From dear Joe." Was this not presumptive evidence, therefore, that her lover's or her husband's name was Joe; that the hair in the locket was from his head; and that it was he who visited her in Manchester? Now, was it not equally feasible that it was on this man's account she had gone down to Manchester? And what I aimed at was to learn, if possible, if he had gone away from Manchester with her. She left the hotel for London Road Station in a cab that belonged to the hotel, and the driver remembered perfectly well that when he drew up at the station a gentlemanly, well-dressed man, with reddish hair, came forward and helped her out, and they walked into the station together. Having regard to the time at which she arrived at the station, it was probable that she booked for London by the train leaving a quarter of an hour later. And though under ordinary circumstances it might have been impossible to find out if a particular person travelled in that train, seeing that a long time had elapsed, a remarkable incident enabled me to prove that she and the man did go up to London by that train. The incident, let me say, was only remarkable in so far that it enabled me to trace the murderer, for in other respects it was very commonplace, as it was nothing more than this. When the woman arrived at Euston Station she found that her box, which had been put in at Manchester, was missing.

Inquiries were instituted, but nothing could be heard of it at the time, and the officials promised to use every endeavour to recover it, and, as soon as they did so, forward it to her address, which she gave as Mrs. Guthrie, at a private hotel in Euston Road.

The day following, a well-dressed man with "reddish hair" called at the station-master's office to know if his "wife's" box had been found. It had not; whereupon he got very angry, and threatened that if it was not forthcoming in two days he would sue the Company. The station-master described him as a man of middle height, of fresh complexion, a moustache, but no beard, age probably thirty. He had small blue eyes, a somewhat sullen expression of face, and one of his front teeth was missing, which caused him to lisp slightly. He spoke with a pronounced Scotch accent, was well dressed, wore a massive gold watch-chain, and gold studs in his shirt. This was a very definite description, and I felt now that my clues were strengthening. Nothing more was heard at the station of either him or his wife, though it was not until four days later that the box was recovered, it having been taken on to Birmingham; and soon after its arrival at Euston it was delivered at Mrs. Guthrie's address. Euston Road and the contiguous streets abound in so-called "private hotels," and not infrequently the word "private" covers a multitude of sins. The house patronized by Mrs. Guthrie and her husband—for I had indubitable evidence that he stayed with her—was one of the best of the kind. They stayed there for three days, and on the afternoon of the third day went out together and never returned. That was a grimly significant fact, and seemed to me to strongly point to the reddish-haired man as the murderer. It was the day after they

disappeared that the lost box was delivered by the railway company; and as it had never been claimed, it had remained in the house ever since, and I took possession of it. The contents turned out to be a woman's miscellaneous wearing apparel; but what was of more interest to me was a bundle of letters in a man's handwriting, and all signed "Joe." Sometimes it was "Your affectionate Joe"; at others, "Your own dear Joe," "Yours as ever, Joe," "Always yours, Joe." He seemed to have rung the changes pretty well. None of the letters bore any address or date, but the envelopes were stamped with the Glasgow postmark. They were all addressed to "Mrs. Thornton." In one was the line, "I enclose post-office order for £10 to get what you want." In another the writer said, "I shall be in Manchester on the 2nd of November, and I want you to meet me there. Pay your landlady up, and tell her you are going to Manchester. I enclose the address of a temperance hotel in London Road, to which you can go, and I will come to you. Till then, adieu."

This letter was pregnant with a great significance, and seemed to me to clearly point to a deliberate plan. The date, allowing for the time that elapsed until she disappeared from the hotel in London, pretty accurately fixed the date of the murder, for it will be remembered that the medical evidence testified that the woman had been dead, when her body was found in Grimond's Buildings, about six weeks, and she was discovered on Christmas Eve. So, allowing for a few days spent in Manchester and a few days in London, that would bring her death up to about the time that the doctor said she must have died.

Marshalling all the facts that I had now laboriously gathered up, I determined that the murderer was her

husband, and her husband was none other than Mr. Joseph Grimond, the owner of the buildings. If that hypothesis was not admissible, how was it that the woman could have been induced to go to an empty house? Assuming that the house belonged to her husband, nothing was more likely than that she should go. Without stating my suspicions to any one, I ascertained from Grimond's London agents that he in every detail answered the description given me by the station-master. Now, if Joseph Grimond had not murdered his wife, why had he not made inquiries about her, and why had he not gone back to the hotel to claim her box? These were very grave questions, and seemed capable of being answered only in one way. But still, after all, it was only presumptive evidence, and there might be a grave flaw in it, so I resolved to strengthen it still more.

My investigations were now continued in Glasgow, where I learned that Joseph Grimond at the beginning of December had married the widow of a Glasgow printer. He had long been courting her; she was considerably older than he was, and not good-looking, according to the reports, but she had an ample fortune, which would counterbalance the want of beauty and youth. Soon after their wedding the newly-married pair had sailed for America on a tour, as they both had friends in America. And now I was enabled to add another link to my chain. I learned that the bride's sister had given Grimond as a marriage present a pair of solid and valuable gold sleeve-links, and she had had the letter "J" engraved on the face of them. Those links the villain had evidently worn when he lured his wretched servant-wife to his own premises, and there strangled her in order that he might marry the rich

widow. It was an old story of human infamy and wickedness, but none the less sad and pitiable because it was old.

My evidence was now sufficiently strong to enable me to apply for a warrant for Joseph Grimond's arrest. Armed with this, and all the necessary papers to ensure his extradition, I started for America. Six weeks later I arrested Grimond at an hotel in Washington, to the intense horror of his wife, who was quite a middle-aged woman, but who, nevertheless, seemed greatly attached to him, and broke out into a passion of grief when she heard of the horrible charge preferred against her husband. Although he seemed to give way to dark despair, he vowed to her solemnly that he was innocent, and would soon be able to clear himself, a vow that I felt perfectly sure would never be proved true.

Pending the necessary formalities before he could be handed over to my custody for conveyance to England, he was lodged in the House of Detention in Washington. As every one is aware who knows America, the prison laws in that country are singularly lax as compared with our own, and a prisoner who is detained only on suspicion is allowed a great deal of liberty. He has almost the run of the prison; can smoke, chat, play cards, receive visitors, and do many other things that would not be tolerated for a moment at home. This freedom enabled Joseph Grimond to mature a plan of escape, with the connivance, no doubt, of his wife, and by means of heavy bribes to two of the warders, who were subsequently found guilty and severely punished. But in the meantime the murderer got off, and though it was proved that he started immediately for New York, all trace of him from that point was lost, and, I am sorry to say,

never recovered. A strict watch was kept upon his wife for some time. She remained in Washington only a few days after her husband's escape, then she went to Chicago, where she stayed with some relatives for nearly six months. After that she returned to Glasgow; but she was a broken, desolate woman. Although she was doubtless instrumental in effecting his escape, there was reason to believe that she never afterwards communicated with him.

What became of him we never knew—he disappeared effectually. But wherever he went to, and whatever he did, remorse and the stings of a guilty conscience must have made his life a hell on earth, for he could know no happiness, no peace. The brand of Cain was on him; and as he moved amongst his fellow-men, it must always have been with the constant dread that any moment might sound in his ear the fatal words—“Joseph Grimond, I arrest you for murder!” Truly the ways of wickedness are thorny ways indeed, and the bed of the murderer is a nest of scorpions!

Grimond's Buildings remained empty for many a long year, until they fell into ruins. At last the land was sold, and new houses erected thereon, which purged the spot of the evil repute that the murder of poor Mrs. Grimond had caused to attach to it.

THE STORY OF A BANK-NOTE FORGER.

OF course, every one knows that pound notes are current all over Scotland, and that certain banks have the privilege of issuing their own notes. Although less common than the lower value notes, five-pound notes are also in use. Each bank issuing paper money takes every possible precaution to guard itself against forgery, and not only are the designs very intricate and special, but the paper is also of a special quality. To forge a Bank of England note now that would escape the detection of any one used to notes would be almost impossible; and, for this reason, the paper upon which the notes are printed is of a peculiar character, and there is no other paper like it in the world; nor could any other country manufacture paper of the same kind with the same marks, because all civilized countries recognize the union for the protection of trade marks. I have told in some of my previous works how Bank of England paper was stolen years ago from the mills where it is manufactured, and how notes printed on this paper were put into circulation by a desperate and daring band of men. They were very speedily brought to book, however, and suffered condign punishment. The Scotch bank-note paper is perhaps more easily imitated, providing that any one having the necessary plant will venture to manufacture it. Apart from this, it is easier relatively to forge Scotch notes than English notes. But under the most favourable circumstances it

will be seen that difficulties of no ordinary kind confront the would-be note-forgery, and only a person having special qualifications for the work would venture on it, for the risks are tremendous, and the punishment in the event of detection unusually heavy. On the other hand, the gains are great, and from time to time men of ability and talent have been found who, for the sake of the gains, have run the risks.

It is almost unnecessary to say that this class of crime is one which a man can hardly undertake single-handed. It is all but indispensable that he should have assistants and confederates, and when a secret has to be entrusted to several people its chances of leaking out are very great. For a band of men to organize themselves into a confederacy for the perpetration of crime is to ensure detection sooner or later; there is certain to be a weak link, and a chain is never any stronger than its weakest link. These remarks, which serve as a preface to my story, will be illustrated in a striking manner by what follows, which is, I venture to think, as strange a story of forgery as the annals of crime can furnish, and it seems rather to belong to the realms of fiction than fact. But is it not true that stories of crime furnish us with more romances than the fictionist has ever evolved? I should mention here that at the present day bank-note forgery is less frequent and much more difficult than it was formerly, and this for several reasons—the chief of them being, perhaps, the special paper with its water-marks, and the more elaborate designs of the notes. The water-mark, however, applies only to the English paper, as there is no water-mark in the Scotch paper, which, nevertheless, is of a very peculiar texture, and experts can detect an imitation at once. But we are not all experts. Some of us, indeed, get bank-notes so

infrequently that we are never likely to become experts.

The banks operated upon in the case I am dealing with were a Scotch bank with its headquarters in Edinburgh, and a French bank with its headquarters in Paris. In the case of the French bank, the notes could be changed at almost any money-changers in the country at a discount; but, as to have offered any large quantity to one changer would have aroused suspicions, the transactions were of necessity limited. But Scotch notes being currency in Scotland, a wider field presented itself for the rogues to exercise their craft and ingenuity.

The first direct intimation that there were any spurious notes in circulation came from a respectable tradesman carrying on business in the west of Edinburgh as a grocer and wine-merchant. For some weeks a very lady-like woman of about forty, well dressed, and wearing widow's weeds, had made small purchases at the grocer's in question. She never bought anything that she could not carry away with her, and always resisted the tradesman's solicitations to be allowed to send the purchases home by his shop-boy or the delivery cart. The course she pursued, however, only became suspicious in the light of subsequent events.

One Saturday night pretty late, and about half-an-hour before the time of closing, the lady went into the shop and made a small purchase, including a bottle of wine, and, having paid for the articles, she was going out, when suddenly she turned back as if a thought had struck her, and said in her blandest manner—

“Oh, by the way, have you any gold you could exchange with me for notes? I am leaving for England to-morrow, where I am going to pay a visit, and, as you know, Scotch notes are no use there.”

As the grocer did a large cash trade, especially on a Saturday night, he usually had a considerable amount of specie at that hour, a fact which the interesting lady had no doubt taken pains to ascertain. The unsuspecting tradesman, anxious to oblige a customer whose plausibility seemed to admit of no questioning, answered—

“I dare say I can give you a little gold; but, usually, on a night like this I have more silver than gold.”

“Oh, silver will do just as well,” she said.

“How much do you require?” he asked.

“Well, I have a large number of notes. What amount can you spare?”

“I dare say I could manage ten or twenty pounds for you if you don’t mind having silver as well. But perhaps you don’t want anything like that amount?”

She smiled sweetly at this, and said she could take forty or fifty pounds if he could spare as much; and, opening her satchel, she produced a roll of notes, and took from it two for five pounds and ten for one pound. The man counted the notes, put them into his cash-box, and gave her the amount in specie, part gold, part silver.

“I suppose you can’t let me have any more?” she asked.

The grocer found that he could make up another ten pounds, and she gave him notes to that value. Then, with the most profuse thanks, saying that she would be returning in the course of a month, and hoped to be a better customer to him, she took her departure.

About ten minutes or a quarter of an hour after she had gone, the shop boy was sweeping out the shop, and picked up close to where the lady had stood a small pocket-book with ivory covers, and clasped with a silver

clasp. He at once handed it to his master, who recognized it as one he had seen in possession of the lady; but as he did not know her address, he could not return it, and so put it into a drawer in his safe, in order that it might be given up to her when she came back.

When she came back!

If the confiding tradesman had waited until the fascinating lady returned of her own accord he would have been pretty grey-headed; but never dreaming that anything was wrong, he wound up his business for the night and went home. If he had but known what was hanging over his head, it is pretty certain that his serenity of mind on Sunday would have been very seriously disturbed.

On Monday morning, soon after he had opened his shop, he despatched his chief assistant to the bank with the money that had been deposited in the safe on Saturday night, including the notes he had got from the lady.

It should be stated that while some of these notes were new and crisp, by far the larger number of them were dirty and limp, as if they had been a long time in circulation. They also represented three different banks. Some hours passed, and then there came to the tradesman a messenger from the bank, asking him to be good enough to go there, as the manager wished to see him. Of course, the tradesman was a little astonished by this request, but suspicion never crossed his mind. However, his placidity was soon to be ruffled, for almost the first words of the manager were—

“Do you know where those notes came from that were paid into your account this morning?”

This question was like a bolt from the blue, and, as the grocer himself said, you might have “knocked him

down with a feather." At first he could only gasp out—

"Why—why do you ask?"

"Because we have reason to think they are all forged notes."

It is easy for the reader to conceive the effect of this remark on the grocer's mind. For some moments he was in a manner stunned, as he gathered that he had been victimized out of thirty pounds by the charming lady, who had charmed him too effectively. He told the story of how he obtained them, and while he was there another batch of notes arrived from a baker in the neighbourhood, who was also a victim of the adventuress. But in his case she had only succeeded in palming off fifteen pounds' worth.

A careful examination and comparison of these various notes proved conclusively that they were forgeries, but very clever forgeries they were, their weakest part being the paper. That, however, was by no means a bad imitation, and they might have been in circulation amongst the general public for a long time without their spuriousness being detected. The dirty notes had been specially crumpled and dirtied in order to give them the appearance of age, while about the new ones there was nothing whatever to attract the attention of the unpractised eye.

No time was lost in communicating the discovery to the police authorities, and it became my duty to at once take the case up. As the morning wore on, reports came from other banks which had received notes from tradesmen in different parts of the city, and it was evident that a most extensive swindle had been perpetrated. In some cases, however, the notes had been changed by "an old grey-haired gentleman"

with white moustache, and a long white beard, and attractive manners, who was described as being dressed fashionably, but not loudly.

There could be no doubt that the three persons were in league, and that pointed to a conspiracy of a very serious nature, and we soon had reason to believe that a large number of forged notes were in general circulation.

I have spoken of a small pocket-book that was picked up in the grocer's shop after the woman had left on the Saturday night, and which she had no doubt accidentally dropped. This book was handed to me, and on examining it, I found it contained many entries similar to the following :—

10	1	...	10
10	5	...	50
25	1	...	25
3	5	...	15
8	5	...	40

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Now, if this meant anything, it represented the transactions carried on, and the first column of figures were no doubt the number of notes ; the second their value ; and the third the sum total. And as such entries were numerous, the inference was that some thousands of pounds' worth of notes had been printed. The conclusion I came to was this. The forgers had been operating for a long time, and doing a flourishing business ; but being desirous of shifting their quarters, they got rid of their surplus stock of fictitious paper by that *grand coup* on the Saturday night. That night had evidently been chosen because Saturday is usually a busy day, and considerable sums of money are

accumulated after banking hours. This argued an artfulness and cunning on the part of the operators which showed that they were no novices at the trade.

Inquiries made at the station revealed the fact that three persons—an elderly grey-headed man and two well-dressed females—left Edinburgh for London by the night train on Sunday. These persons answered the description of those wanted. Owing to Sunday being a slack night, and comparatively few passengers leaving the city, the man and women attracted more attention than they otherwise would have done. They had a quantity of luggage, travelled first-class, and paid for their tickets with two five-pound notes, which proved to be forged ones. Of course, information was at once telegraphed to London; and, in the meantime, I found the cabman who brought them from their lodgings to the station. He had been called to a house in Morningside Crescent, and, on going there, I ascertained they had occupied a suite of rooms in one of the houses for three months. They represented themselves as Mr. and Mrs. Staffler and their daughter Millicent, but generally called “Milly.” It was represented that Mr. Staffler was a scientific man, and was engaged in writing a scientific work of great importance. One of the rooms he used as “a study,” and no one but his wife and daughter was allowed to enter it, with the exception of a young man, who was supposed to be the daughter’s lover, and was known as Robert Muirhead. He was described as rather a handsome young fellow of about eight-and-twenty, while Millicent was slightly younger, and of very attractive appearance and agreeable manner. This interesting family, when they first took the apartments, stated that they had been staying for some time in Inverness, but found the place

cold and insufferably dull, and so had been induced to try Edinburgh, which they professed to be greatly charmed with. As they paid well for their apartments they were allowed to do much as they liked. The house was tenanted by two spinster sisters, who were highly pleased with their lodgers, and considered them to be very superior people—quiet, unobtrusive, and easily satisfied, never finding fault with anything. Milly was an especial favourite, and was looked upon as a most charming young woman.

Robert Muirhead had ceased to visit the house about a fortnight before the family departed, and on one of the sisters asking Milly one day what had become of him, she said that he had gone south on business. At that time the lodgers had not mentioned a word about leaving, and their intimation that they were going to do so came upon the sisters as a surprise. According to the agreement, they were to give a fortnight's notice, but they represented that they had been suddenly called away in connection with some important business, and in lieu of notice they paid a fortnight's rent with brand-new forged notes, though, of course, the sisters did not know then that the notes were forged ones.

On examining the room which Mr. Staffler had used as his "study," I found evidence of the work he had carried on. The table-cloth and the carpet in places were stained and burnt with acid, and in a cupboard was an empty and unlabelled bottle, which had contained sulphuric acid; there were also several sheets of paper similar to that on which the forged notes were printed, and in a drawer in a desk were some small tools such as are used by copper-plate engravers. In spite of their apparent caution, therefore, the Stafflers

—not that I believed for a moment that that was their name—had left traces of their shameful calling behind them.

When the news of the forgeries leaked out, there was great excitement, and it was soon made manifest that notes representing a very large sum of money had been put into circulation. Of course, it was impossible then to find out even approximately to what extent the forgery had been carried on, because a good many people who found themselves in possession of any of the forged notes would endeavour to pass them on to some one else. Such is human nature. One thing was clear, however—tradesmen had been victimized right and left, and a clamorous demand was raised that the most strenuous efforts should be made to effect the arrest of the Staffler family, and of the handsome Robert Muirhead, who, it was thought, would be able to throw a good deal of light on the affair. Perhaps I need not say that these efforts were put forth irrespective of the clamour; but no arrest was announced from London, and, as far as Muirhead was concerned, he might have been a myth, for we could get no trace of him. I found on inquiry that people answering the description of the Stafflers and Muirhead had stayed some time in Inverness, and were supposed to be a superior American family travelling in Europe for their pleasure. The young man, however, was not known as Muirhead, but as Leslie Staffler, and passed as the son. Why he had changed his name and position when he came to Edinburgh was not very clear, but there could be no mistake that he was a confederate; and altogether these clever rogues had managed their business with consummate skill, as their numerous victims testified in a painful manner.

Having learnt as much as there was to be learnt about them apparently in Edinburgh, and as they managed to avoid arrest so far, I started for London, and I was then informed that amongst the money-changers of the metropolis there had been placed a large number of French notes, and there was every reason to believe that it was the work of the Stafflers. Inquiry elicited the fact that the notes in each case had been sold by a stylishly-dressed, good-looking young man, whose description answered that of Robert Muirhead, with the exception that he spoke with a foreign accent, and was supposed to be a Frenchman. I did not attach much importance to that, however, as that character could be easily assumed by a clever man, such as he undoubtedly was. Moreover, the dates on which the notes had been purchased by the money-changers corresponded with Muirhead's disappearance from Edinburgh; so that while the Staffler family were victimizing the Edinburgh folk with bogus Scotch notes, Muirhead was doing the same by the London money-changers with spurious French paper.

On reviewing all the facts of the case, it did not seem to me in the least degree likely that this family of interesting swindlers would remain in London. The logical conclusion was that they had realized as much money as possible, with the intention of leaving the country, and I turned my attention to trying to discover to what part of the globe they had gone to. The Stafflers would arrive in London from Edinburgh early on the Monday morning, and they would have ample time to get one of the morning steamers crossing the Channel for the Continent; and, pursuing my inquiries amongst the steamers, I ascertained that on that particular morning an elderly man and woman, and a

young lady and a young man had taken passage in the Ostend boat; and as the description of these people corresponded with the Stafflers and Muirhead, who had evidently joined them, I determined to follow them to Ostend at any rate, in the hope that I should pick up their trail again there and run them down.

I got unmistakable evidence in Ostend that the Staffler family had been there, and that they had gone on to Brussels. I also went, and I traced them to the Hôtel de Bruxelles, where they had spent some days. They had, however, gone into Switzerland, but not without leaving something more than a clue behind.

It appeared that on their journey from Ostend to Brussels they lost a portion of their luggage, consisting of two large trunks, and considerable difficulty had been experienced in tracing the missing baggage. As the Stafflers were anxious to continue their travels, they deputed an agent in Brussels to recover their missing property, and forward it to Madrid, where they were to be in two months' time.

I should mention here that they had changed their names on arrival on the Continent, and passed as Monsieur and Madame and Mademoiselle De Fraine. While Muirhead had blossomed into a Count, and was described as Count Eugène Lorette. This argued that they were all used to travelling on the Continent, and that they were clever and accomplished swindlers. Their object in going to Spain was very obvious, and my first impulse was to follow them to Switzerland—if they had really gone there—and try to effect their arrest before reaching Spanish soil, where they would be able to defy the English law. On reflection, however, I came to the conclusion that my journey would probably be in the nature of a wild-goose chase, for as

soon as I got to Switzerland, I might find they were somewhere else—not that I intended to abandon the chase. Indeed, I made up my mind to capture the fugitives sooner or later, but under the existing circumstances, I could not help thinking I should gain most in the meantime by trying to get possession of their luggage, inasmuch as it was highly probable it would afford some important information regarding the people I was so anxious to get some information about.

Having decided to take this course, I lodged information with the Belgian authorities that “Count Lorette” and the “De Fraines” were believed to be forgers, and that should the lost baggage be recovered, it was important in the interests of justice that it should be detained. I also learnt that the French police were exceedingly anxious to make the acquaintance of the runaways, who, the police asserted, had put into circulation a large number of forged French notes. I therefore co-operated with my French colleagues, and the result was in about a fortnight I received word from the “Douane” in Brussels—that is, the Customs House—that the missing baggage was lying there. In the meantime I had obtained a warrant for the arrest of the Stafflers and Muirhead, and I now sought the permission of the Belgian authorities to be allowed to examine the luggage. This permission was accorded me, subject to the chief of police and a Customs official being present.

The luggage consisted of what is known as a “Saratoga” of large dimensions, and a heavy wooden box covered with leather and studded with nails. The Saratoga was found to contain female wearing apparel of a miscellaneous kind, as well as costly. Indeed, it

was all more or less of excellent quality, and showed that the ladies of the party of forgers were people of refined tastes. But I had already come to that conclusion from the style in which they had lived in Edinburgh, which clearly proved that they were not people of vulgar habits. Interesting as these garments were, they did not afford us any clues; but on opening the black leather box our breath was almost taken away by what it revealed. There was a complete and unique plant for carrying on the business of an engraver on a scale commensurate with the production of bank-notes. There were engraving tools of every description, and squares of copper plate such as are used for engraving upon. There was also nearly a ream of bank-note paper, and a chemical laboratory in a case by itself. We also found eight engraved plates for printing bank-notes. Four of these plates were for Scotch one-pound notes of various banks, a fifth was for five-pound notes, and the other three were for French notes.

Here, then, we had the clearest possible evidence of the illegal calling the Stafflers had been engaged in, and it also proved that they were people of skill and ability, who, having so far been successful in their nefarious operations, were hardly likely to scruple to continue them wherever they might be, as soon as ever their exchequer wanted replenishing. They had so far carried on their work with a skill that left nothing to be desired as far as they were concerned, and, inferentially, they must have found it exceedingly profitable. But such people were dangerous to society at large, and it was imperative that they should be hunted down and punished for their crimes. Having succeeded in getting on their track, I was not likely to leave them, but I was confronted with a difficulty which seemed to

threaten that they might be able to escape arrest, owing to there being no extradition treaty with Spain. At the present day the difficulty is practically removed, but at the time I am writing there was a sort of nominal treaty, though it was in effect a dead letter. Practically, a fugitive foreigner in Spain, who had fled from some other country to escape arrest for crime, was safe unless he was a murderer. Even Spain, with her barbarous customs and antiquated laws, would not give shelter to any one who had wilfully taken human life. But a forger, a bankrupt, a swindler, was regarded as being entitled to claim the so-called hospitality of the country. In plain words, that meant, that as long as an alien fugitive had plenty of money to spend in the country, he was not molested, but as soon as his purse was empty he was kicked out. Now, in the case of a forger or a swindler who was wanted by some other country, Spain, under pressure from the country's representative, might order the person's arrest, but would not give him up until he had in effect been tried in accordance with Spanish law, which, to say nothing of the slowness with which it moved, was generally a farce, and almost invariably resulted in the representative being informed that the Spanish Court was not satisfied with the evidence adduced that the man whose arrest was sought was guilty of the offences imputed to him. Therefore it was not considered desirable that he should be refused the hospitality of Spain so long as he committed no offence against his right of asylum.

I have been so far discursive in order that the reader may understand the difficulty that confronted me if I tried to arrest the Stafflers while they were in Spain. Clever people like them were sure to be well acquainted with the advantages they would enjoy by residing in

Spain. And as I doubted very much whether I should be able to obtain their surrender, though I proved them guilty up to the hilt, I decided to resort to a stratagem and endeavour to lure them from their asylum. In order to do this I had to enlist the co-operation of the Belgian authorities, which, I am glad to say, they readily accorded me. Our first step was to ascertain if the Stafflers were really in Madrid, and to this end the chief of the Brussels Customs House addressed a letter to "Monsieur de Fraine" at the hotel he mentioned he should stay at while in the Spanish capital—to say that the baggage had been recovered, but before it could be forwarded on Monsieur would have to fill up an official form (which was enclosed), on which he was to accurately describe the baggage, and to get his description attested by the British Consul. This little ruse succeeded admirably, and "Monsieur," in addition to filling up the form, wrote a letter in excellent French, in which he expressed a hope that the boxes would be sent on to him immediately, as their contents were of the utmost importance to him.

The handwriting of this letter I compared with some specimens of the handwriting of Mr. Staffler which I had obtained from his landlady in Edinburgh, and there could no longer be a shadow of doubt that Monsieur de Fraine and Mr. Staffler were identical.

So far, so good. The next thing now was to get this enterprising gentleman, and if possible his associates, out of Spain, and the problem to solve was how was this to be done. At first it seemed difficult. But I hit at last upon the following expedient. I induced the Customs House authorities to forward a letter to him, saying that owing to certain formalities that had to be gone through, they could only give up possession

of the property to him in *propria personá*. Therefore it would be necessary for him to come for it.

I waited in suspense for several days, for as Staffler was a shrewd and clever man he might not readily take the bait, but scent danger. But to my intense delight he wrote saying he would be in Brussels on a certain date. In due course he appeared, and the value he attached to the property was proved by the fact of his taking such a long journey to recover it. And his disgust when he was suddenly pounced upon by the police and placed under arrest may be easily imagined. He was a tall, gentlemanly-looking man of about sixty, with a pleasant, genial face, affable manners, and excellent address. His whole bearing was aristocratic in the extreme, and he was exceedingly well educated, speaking several European languages with ease and fluency. It was difficult to imagine that such a man could have been guilty of so grave a crime. Of course I sought to ascertain who he was, but he resolutely and obstinately refused to give the slightest information about himself. At first he denied the charge I preferred against him, but in the face of the things found in the leather trunk he could not persist in the denial, and he sank into a state of utter dejection, which suggested the possibility of his trying to end his life now that he had been so neatly trapped. A close watch was therefore set upon him.

The next step was to get his wife and daughter and the daughter's lover into the same net; and in order to bring that about we secured the services of a man who was known to be exceedingly clever at imitating handwriting. He was instructed to write a letter which I dictated, and which was addressed to "Madame de Fraine." It was ostensibly, of course, written by her

husband, and it stated that he had met with an accident, and that he would like her and his daughter to come to him at once. No mention was made of the "Count," who, if he were really the girl's lover, or even her husband, would, I felt sure, accompany her, if the letter did not arouse any suspicion, and succeeded in its object.

In a week's time the answer came that they would start immediately, and the writer added—"Bella and I are greatly concerned about you, especially as you do not state the nature of the accident; and so is William, who will, of course, accompany us. I hope there is no danger to be apprehended that the English bloodhounds will get on our trail."

This letter afforded me keen satisfaction, for it was almost in the nature of a confession. Of course I inferred that "Bella" was the daughter, and that "William" was her husband or lover.

Three days later the interesting trio landed in Brussels, and were promptly pounced upon. The two women were both good-looking, the younger one especially, and William was a fine young man. I will not attempt to describe their feelings when they found that they had been decoyed into a trap. They raved, they protested their innocence, they threatened; but the law had gripped them, and was not likely to let go its hold until it had proved them innocent or had exacted its due meed of vengeance for their crimes. When Mr. Staffler heard that his family were secured, it seemed as if he would go raving mad.

In due course, the four were removed to England. The French authorities wanted to deal with them first, but I defeated them and carried off my prisoners in triumph; and as their offence had been committed in Scotland, they were taken to Edinburgh.

Recognizing that he had met with his doom at last, the elder prisoner made a full confession before he was even brought up for trial. The prickings of his conscience were too much for him, and remorse entirely broke him down. He therefore wrote out in outline the story of his life, the substance of which was as follows:—

His real name was Angus Maitland Nelson, and he was the son of a Scotch laird who had at one time been very wealthy. Angus had been well brought up and partly educated in Aberdeen, from whence he went to an English University, and graduated, as his father wished him to enter the English Church. He was anxious, however, to see the world, and obtained an appointment as chaplain in the navy; ultimately he fell into disgrace through extravagance, which led him deeply into debt, and too much fondness for jovial society. Consequently he had to leave the navy, and as his father refused to recognize him, he had to turn his attention to some means of earning his living. He had always been passionately fond of drawing, and excelled as a draughtsman; and he had also taught himself the art of engraving. This served him now in good stead, as he obtained a lucrative employment with a large London firm of engravers and draughtsmen, where he soon distinguished himself. His fatal weakness—extravagance—however, ran him into difficulties again, and he had to go through the Bankruptcy Court. A few years later he married the widow of a naval officer. She had a daughter then about twelve years of age, a very handsome girl. Mrs. Nelson was possessed of means, and for a time the family lived in good style in London, and moved in some of the best society. But she, like her husband, was rashly extravagant, and at last they found it expedient to clandestinely leave

the country and go abroad in order to avoid their clamorous creditors. After a period of exile, they returned and went to Scotland. Mr. Nelson's father had recently died, but he had left nothing to his son, who for a time supported himself and family by doing book illustrations for some of the Edinburgh publishers. This, however, was not sufficiently remunerative to enable them to keep up the appearances they aimed at. Nelson could have done better in London, but his many creditors there rendered it expedient that he should give the metropolis a wide berth. He therefore went with his wife and daughter to Paris, where they took up their residence, and where soon afterwards it occurred to Nelson to try his hand at bank-note forgery. It is evident that by this time his many excesses and chronic impecuniosity had destroyed his better nature, and he had become desperate, for he tried his hand at imitating a French bank-note, and with such success that he took a bold plunge at once into crime.

He seems to have made a perfect study of this branch of the forger's art, and apparently he had little or no difficulty in securing the co-operation of his wife and daughter. Being stylish women of good address, they found it an easy matter to dispose of the forged notes which Nelson turned out so assiduously. During this period they netted over two hundred thousand francs, but Paris began to get too hot for them, and they recrossed the Channel, and under the name of Staffler took up their residence in Inverness, so that they might live in retirement for a time, as they had actually conceived the idea of forging Scotch notes to the extent of at least a hundred thousand pounds. It was a gigantic and daring scheme, but Nelson believed he could realize it.

During their residence in Inverness, Isabella met and fell in love with a young man named William Ostlere, who was a clerk in a bank. He seems to have so ardently reciprocated her passion, that he proved as pliable as potter's clay in her hand, and he was soon taken into the secret of the forgeries, readily giving the Nelsons the benefit of his experience as a bank clerk, which proved of great value to them.

For months the work was persevered in, but in the meantime William Ostlere and Isabella Nelson went to London, where they were duly married, and rejoined the Nelsons in Edinburgh, whither they had removed; and there they began to realize the notes which up to then had been completed. Of course these fell very far short of the hundred thousand pounds, nevertheless some thousands were secured. But, as in Paris, the clever family began to think that the place was growing hot, and that it was prudent to clear out. They therefore got rid of as many notes as they could on that particular Saturday night, and started for Spain *via* Belgium, intending to "do" Switzerland *en route*.

Such was the remarkable story that Angus Maitland Nelson committed to paper. It was truly a remarkable story; and it revealed a pitiable case of misapplied genius and cleverness. Nelson was undoubtedly a genius in his way, and but for his fatal moral weakness could have gained distinction and position. The women had been endowed by nature with almost everything that women could wish for. They were good-looking and unusually attractive; and possessed in a very high degree the art of making themselves agreeable and fascinating. They could therefore have easily won the homage and service of men, and have ranked amongst the favoured ones of the earth. But they also were weak.

Their vanity entirely killed their scruples. They loved dress, finery, and good society, and in their desire to enjoy these things they added and abetted the husband and father to outrage the law and sin against God and man.

William Ostlere was a somewhat commonplace young man. He was good-looking and knew it, but he was insufferably vain. It was this vanity that enabled the Nelsons to entangle him. They traded upon it, and he fell. His people were poor but highly respectable, and the disgrace his conduct brought upon them almost crushed them.

As will be remembered, the trial of these people caused a great sensation. Defence was practically out of the question in face of Nelson's written confession. But still, such defence as could be set up was done with a view to mitigating the severity of the sentences. It is to Nelson's credit that he endeavoured to take the entire onus of the crime on his own shoulders. He declared that he entirely subjected the women to his will; that, as a matter of fact, they were passive in his hands; and that Ostlere was a mere tool, too weak to offer any resistance. That he was the ringleader there could be no doubt, but nevertheless his wife and daughter were no less bad in degree; while Ostlere was as certainly more rogue than fool, though he received the lowest sentence. Nelson was sentenced to fifteen years, which in his case and at his age was practically "a lifer." The two women were sentenced to five years each. As was anticipated at the time by those who knew him, Nelson did not live to complete his term, but went to his account six years later.

There is a proverb in Spanish which says, "Gains that are ill-gotten canker the getter," and this unfortunate man proved the truth of it.

THE FATAL ERROR.

A VERY well-known character in certain parts of Glasgow some years ago was a young married woman named Rachel Goodman. She had brought upon herself an unenviable notoriety owing to her drunken habits and her frequent appearances in the Police Courts. Anything more sad and pitiable than this poor creature's life it would be difficult to conceive. She was the daughter of a baker who had been in a very large way of business, and had brought his family up well and respectably. Rachel was the youngest of four girls, and was conspicuous for two things—her remarkably prepossessing appearance and a stubborn will.

When she was little more than fifteen she made the acquaintance of a young man five years her senior, whose name was Herbert Goodman. He was then occupying a position as clerk in the office of a shipping firm, but his habits were very far from creditable. His companions were not such that any young man having a regard for his reputation would care to associate with, and his general conduct was reprehensible in the extreme. Nevertheless, he was a young man of exceedingly plausible manners and of good address, and he managed to so far blind Rachel to his faults that she fell desperately in love with him. It was not to be wondered at that this caused her parents great concern, for they could not in any way regard young Goodman as a suitable partner for their daughter. But when they

represented that view to her she said it was mere stupid prejudice, and that she would not give Herbert up. This decision, however, led to such unpleasantness in her home life that ultimately she yielded—or seemed to do so—to her mother's and sisters' persuasion, and consented to hold no further communication with Goodman, at least for a time; and, in order to remove her from his influence, she was sent to some relatives who resided in the beautiful city of Bath. As her relatives were well off, she was surrounded with every comfort, even luxury; and nothing was neglected that could possibly give her pleasure or add to her happiness.

Her good looks and lady-like appearance soon attracted the attention of a young gentleman, who was a gentleman by birth and education, being a member of an exceedingly good English county family. He was staying in Bath in order that he might take the waters, and became deeply enamoured of Rachel, who seemed to encourage his advances. As a matter of fact, however, she was keeping up a clandestine correspondence with Goodman, who at last, to her relatives' disgust, visited her in Bath; and this coming to the ears of the gentleman who had expressed a desire to marry her, he gave her up and left the city.

Once more all the influence and persuasive powers of the family were brought to bear on Rachel, with the result that she again promised to have nothing more to do with Goodman, and a sum of £200 was paid to him on his signing a bond that he would cease the acquaintance. It would have been thought that, under the circumstances, Rachel, being an intelligent young woman, would have seen for herself that Goodman was a very undesirable person to know; but a woman whose affections have really been won by a man does

not seem to be amenable to ordinary reason. At any rate, Rachel was not, for her infatuation blinded her entirely to her lover's faults; and, in spite of her promises and his bond, the acquaintanceship was, after a time, renewed. There is little doubt that, in his case, he was hopeful of squeezing more money out of her parents, and there is also reason to believe that he was under the impression that if he married her she would have a considerable fortune; and being a thoroughly unprincipled scoundrel, he pursued her with his offensive attentions, and her unfortunate stubbornness led her to continue the connection in spite of all protestations and feelings of those who loved her. At last, in order to try and wean her from her stupid infatuation, she was induced to accompany one of her sisters and a brother on a tour through America and Canada, and she was absent a little over a year. The utmost vigilance was exercised to prevent her either receiving letters from or writing to Goodman; and as she never made the slightest reference to him, it was thought and hoped that she had ceased to think of him with any feelings of regard.

A woman's heart, however, is a mystery, especially when she has a strong will of her own, as in Rachel's case, and no sooner had she returned to Glasgow from her American trip than she renewed the acquaintance with Goodman. This so exasperated her father that he vowed she should not touch a shilling of his money at his death if she married Goodman. It is highly probable that she attached no importance to this threat, for she was her father's youngest and favourite daughter, and she could not bring herself to believe that he would leave her penniless. But whether or not she thought he was in earnest, she did not tell her lover

of the threat, and at last he induced her to marry him secretly. For a whole year they kept the secret well, until it was no longer possible to do so, for the time was approaching when she would have to take upon herself the cares of maternity.

As soon as the truth was revealed, her father was furious. He ordered her to leave his house, and never darken his doors again. The breach thus made was never bridged. His daughter's disobedience so preyed upon his mind that the poor man's health entirely broke down, and he died soon afterwards without being reconciled to his daughter. His vow, too, that he would not leave her anything, was religiously adhered to. Not only did he cut her off penniless, but his other children were to take their portion subject to their never noticing the unhappy Rachel.

And now we have to deal with Rachel Goodman's married life. When her husband found that she was penniless, his true character was revealed, and the love he had professed for her was proved to be a sham. For some time he had led an idle, dissolute life, living principally on credit, in anticipation of the large fortune he was to get when his father-in-law died, for he found plenty of people to trust him, as it was known that the old man was wealthy, and it was quite a fixed idea in the minds of some that Rachel would be handsomely provided for. These calculations, however, were all upset, and when the provisions of the father-in-law's will were known, there was general astonishment, except, of course, amongst his acquaintances and members of his own family.

Fortunately for Rachel, her baby had died. And yet, who can tell? Had it lived, it would have given the poor mother some object to struggle and live for,

and probably have kept her from sinking to the depths into which she sank. Her husband now made her life a burden to her. He had grown tired of her, and he displayed his feelings by cruelty and neglect; and in order to drown her sorrows, she began to drink. When once a woman loses her self-respect so far as to yield to the fatally seductive influences of intoxicants, there is no hope for her. A man *may* be cured of dipsomania, a woman never.

It is a striking illustration of Goodman's artfulness and cunning, that while his wife sank into the depths he tried to pose as a much-injured individual and a martyr. To those who knew nothing of the inner life he led, he appeared an unfortunate young man, and a good deal of sympathy was accorded him, especially by a young widow about his own age. She had been married to an architect and surveyor, who had left her well off. Her name was Jessie Macgregor. She seemed to have conceived the most intense dislike for Rachel Goodman, and the cause for this can be easily defined. She was a weak-minded woman, and entirely mistaken in Goodman's character. She accorded him pity, and pity they say is akin to love. There is no doubt that she helped him very considerably with her purse, and he opened a small tobacconist's shop. But he neglected his wretched wife, turned her out of doors in fact, and she was constantly in trouble through her drinking habits. Members of her family used every possible effort to reclaim her, but these efforts proved useless. She had worshipped an idol, found it clay, and the disappointment had broken her heart. There is no torture like the torture suffered by a woman scorned, and this poor creature found, or thought she found, Lethe in strong drink. When in

her cups she became so excited that the vulgar and stupid called her "mad Rachel"; and she was often met in the street, a pitiable object, and vainly endeavouring to escape from a mob of jeering idiots, who would tear her clothes and besmirch her with the mud of the kennel. I have myself often rescued her from a situation of this kind, and I tried hard to reform her, but it was no use.

Sometimes she was in the habit of going to her husband's house and making a disturbance, and very frequently on such occasions he resorted to personal violence, and she would carry the marks of his brutality for days. Notwithstanding this, Mrs. Macgregor did not lose confidence in him. In fact, her sympathy seemed to grow stronger, for she said she considered it unspeakably sad that he should be burdened with such an abandoned creature as Rachel. She forgot, however, that Rachel was what he had made her. But Mrs. Macgregor undoubtedly looked upon Mrs. Goodman in the light of a rival, and a woman under such circumstances exhibits human hate in its most remarkable and intense aspects. Goodman at this time made no secret of his wish that his wretched wife would kill herself, and he was frequently heard to say that if Rachel was dead he would at once marry Mrs. Macgregor, and be well off.

I was acquainted with all the parties, and I can sum up what my feelings and views were by saying that I regarded Goodman as an unmitigated scoundrel, and Mrs. Macgregor as a vulgar, stupid woman; while all my sympathies, all my pity, were for Rachel. I tried very hard indeed to induce her to change her mode of life; but when once a woman has lost all self-respect, and deadened herself to shame, there is little hope for her.

For nearly five years this state of matters endured, and Goodman's hopes that death would relieve him of his wife seemed as far off realization as ever, for she proved to be remarkably tough and wiry; and could she have been induced to give up her drinking habits, she might have attained a good old age. But one morning—it was the beginning of December—the rumour ran that Goodman had got his wish, for his outcast wife had committed suicide. I heard this not only with surprise, but sincere regret, and also with some suspicion, for Mrs. Goodman had always seemed to me to be a most unlikely person to lay violent hands upon herself.

Owing to the interest I had taken in her, I lost no time in going to the place where she lodged. It was in a squalid house in a wynd off Argyle Street. It appeared that some hours previously her landlady had taken her in a cup of tea, and was horrified to find her on the bed quite dead. She was fully dressed, and seemed to have suffered greatly. Information was at once given to a passing policeman, who in turn summoned a doctor, and the doctor had expressed an opinion, judging from the dead woman's face, that she had died of poison. The body was left precisely as it was found, and the Sheriff was communicated with; and in the meantime I arrived upon the scene, and had an interview with the doctor. He said that she had beyond doubt died of poison; but without a *post-mortem* examination he could not tell what the poison was.

At his suggestion, I made a most careful inspection of the room and everything in it, but not a trace of anything suspicious could I get hold of. I searched the clothes of the deceased, but found nothing; but in her left hand, grasped tightly with the rigours of death,

was a phial about two inches long. I had to get the doctor's assistance to release this phial from the death-clutch. A few drops of dark liquid remained at the bottom, and there was no difficulty in determining that they were laudanum. But the doctor said he did not believe it was a case of laudanum-poisoning, as there was no smell of laudanum about the mouth, and the expression of the dead woman's features was not that which is generally observed on the faces of people who die from laudanum-poisoning. The phial was pretty tightly corked, and was without a label of any kind. The circumstance of the phial being corked seemed to me to be remarkable, and I resolved to watch the case very closely.

The *post-mortem* examination revealed the fact that the poor woman had died from a dose of strychnine, and not the faintest trace of laudanum was found in the body. Here, then, was a mystery, and I set to work to try and solve it.

The people with whom Rachel had lodged were poor, ignorant, and drunken. And the previous night both the man and his wife had been out on the spree, and they had left their daughter, a girl about ten, in charge of the house and a baby. The girl had been to sleep a long time, when she was awakened by, as she thought, her mother and father coming home, and she called out, "Is that you, mother?" At first she got no answer, and she called again, "Mother, is that you?" Then a man answered and said, "No, it's all right; go to sleep."

As she did not recognize the man's voice, and thinking it strange he should be there, she jumped out of her bed and went into the passage, where a gas-jet turned low was burning, and she was able to discern Mrs.

Goodman with a man holding her up with his arm round the waist, and they both went into Mrs. Goodman's room. The child went back to her bed and fell asleep again, and the next thing she heard was that the lodger was dead.

This story, as told by a child, increased the suspicious elements of the case, and seemed to me to point to murder rather than suicide. Although the house was searched from top to bottom, every hole and corner ransacked, not the shadow of a trace of strychnine could be found. The woman had died of this terrible poison, so much was certain, but in her hand was a phial which contained a few drops of laudanum. And yet she had not taken laudanum. The inference to be drawn from this was that *some one* had placed the bottle in her hand just when she was dying, or as soon as she was dead. And the object was to lead to the supposition that Rachel had poisoned herself with laudanum.

The stupidity of the act was so glaring that it would seem incredible were it not a well-established fact that criminals do the most stupid things. Of course, my inquiries were directed to trying to discover who the strange man was who had gone home with Mrs. Goodman. On this point the child was hazy, save on the main fact that a man was there. But whether he was tall or short, dark or fair, well dressed or badly dressed, she could not express the slightest opinion. I necessarily asked myself, who could possibly have had an interest in this poor woman's death? And, knowing what I did of her career, the answer came to me that there was no one who could have desired her death but her husband, and I resolved to work upon the assumption that he was the murderer. With some difficulty I was enabled to trace her movements on the night of her

death. She was in the habit of frequenting a public-house near the Buchanan Street Station, and she was seen by a policeman to leave this place about eleven o'clock, and when she had got some distance past him she was joined by a man, but what the man was like the policeman could not say. A little later, however, a working man met them. He did not know either of them, but his attention was directed to them by the fact that the woman was sick, and was groaning as if in pain, while the man was supporting her. Presently they moved on, but the woman tottered, and suggested to the onlooker that she was suffering greatly.

The man came forward and volunteered the information, and I found that the spot where he had met them was within six or seven minutes' walk of Mrs. Goodman's lodgings. He was so far able to describe the appearance of the man who was with her that I felt morally sure it was her husband. And I resolved at all hazards to apply for a warrant for his arrest. The warrant was granted, and I lost no time in executing it. I arrested Goodman while he was actually at supper with Mrs. Macgregor and two or three other friends. He was literally dumfounded when I announced that I arrested him on a charge of having murdered his wife by administering strychnine to her. The lady, however, became furious, and declared it was a vile and monstrous accusation. But I handed my prisoner over to the custody of two constables, who at once conveyed him to prison, and I proceeded to take charge of everything in his house. Amongst these things was an old cigar-box that I found in a cupboard. The box contained several old pipes, some pieces of string, a rusty razor, a broken penknife, and a piece of screwed-up paper in which was

about half-an-ounce of whitish powder. On submitting this to a chemist, he unhesitatingly pronounced it to be strychnine, and subsequent analysis confirmed this. It was a terrible discovery so far as Goodman was concerned; and pushing my inquiries still further, I ascertained that Goodman was acquainted with a druggist who kept a shop in the South Side. One night, about six months before Mrs. Goodman's death, the druggist had a daughter married, and there was a party at which Goodman was a guest. In the course of the evening he went downstairs and into the shop. This fact would not have been known had he not knocked some bottles over, and the crash caused the druggist to run down to see what was the matter. He found Goodman there with a candle in his hand, and his excuse was that he was suffering from faintness, and was searching for some sal volatile. He had not troubled his friend, he said, as he thought he could find what he wanted himself. He seemed much agitated, and was very pale. His host attached no importance to this incident at the time, but thought that he had taken a little too much drink. The next morning on going to his shop the druggist noticed that a quantity of white powder had been spilled on the counter and the floor, and he found to his astonishment that it was strychnine. On a top shelf just over this part of the counter was a jar containing strychnine, which had evidently been disturbed, for some of the poison was adhering to the rim of the bottle, and the stopper had not been properly replaced. Subsequently, the druggist asked Goodman if he had abstracted any of the strychnine, but he indignantly denied that he had.

Although the druggist thought the circumstance a little strange, he did not attach much importance to it,

and it is incredible that his suspicions were not aroused.

There could now no longer be any reasonable doubt that Goodman had murdered his wife. At any rate, I had none myself, and I did all I could to strengthen the evidence against him. Several witnesses were forthcoming who had heard him express a wish that his wife was dead, as in that case he would marry Mrs. Macgregor. It is somewhat remarkable, and presents us with another problem of the feminine mind, that this woman would not believe in Goodman's guilt, and declared that it was all a conspiracy against him, and that she would spend every penny she possessed, if necessary, in defending him. She so far made good her words as to secure him the very best legal support that could be procured, and both he and she were sanguine, or professed to be so, that the whole charge would fall to the ground, and he would be acquitted. But the accused must soon have seen strong reason for taking a more desponding view as the trial proceeded. The evidence of his friend the druggist told against him terribly, for no one who heard it could doubt that Goodman, on that eventful night, helped himself to strychnine. But for his clumsiness in knocking down some bottles, his visit to the shop would never have been known. But a man with murder in his mind, and who seeks to get the wherewithal to accomplish his crime, needs to be a very cool hand if he would avoid arousing suspicion, and Goodman proved that he was not a cool hand. The person who had met him and Mrs. Goodman on the night of the latter's death, when she was sick in the street, swore to his identity; and the landlady's little daughter, at the house where the unhappy woman lodged, said she was certain, judging from his

voice, that he was the same man who spoke to her in the passage, and told her to go to sleep.

After three days of patient and exhaustive inquiry, and in spite of the most desperate efforts put forth to save him, Herbert Goodman was condemned to death. When sentence was passed upon him, he seemed to be dazed and stupefied, and from that time to the moment when Calcraft pulled the lever that closed his worthless life he preserved a sullen and morose demeanour, and nothing could induce him to confess his crime, although he did not deny it. When the drop fell, it was felt that justice had been done on as cold-blooded and cruel a murderer as ever suffered at the hands of the public executioner. But had Goodman been endowed with a little more acuteness of discernment he might have escaped the gallows; for, had he not committed the fatal error of placing the laudanum-phial in the hand of the dead woman, but had put a solution of strychnine instead, the case would have been regarded as undoubtedly one of suicide.

THE LOST BRILLIANTS.

THE oft-repeated assertion that real life can furnish us with romances infinitely more startling than any the fictionist can invent is powerfully exemplified in the following story. Indeed, it goes without saying that the inventor of plots must necessarily draw on real life for his materials. I would almost go the length of saying that I doubt if anything that has ever been put into a novel, however absurd and exaggerated it may seem, has not had its counterpart amongst living men and women. Some years ago a story was published in which a man was made to commit suicide by slowly ramming a red-hot bar of iron down his throat. A priggish weekly journal which claims to be "a high-class literary review," and to "have no sympathy with mere literary pretensions," fell foul of this incident and smashed the unfortunate author. After a good deal of high falutin peculiar to itself, and cheap sneering, for which it stands conspicuous, the silly journal went on to say that so utterly improbable was the incident that the book stood condemned by it alone. Time, however, brought the author his revenge. A well-known Major in the army was sitting in the drawing-room of his house one winter evening with his wife, who was amusing him by playing on the piano, when he put the brass poker in the fire, and, having made it almost white-hot, he slowly thrust it down his throat. His wife was made aware of what he was doing by hearing a fall and a groan. On

turning round she beheld with horror her husband lying on the floor with the poker half hidden in his throat. Assistance was immediately summoned, but the wretched man expired in the course of twelve hours in the most horrible and excruciating agony. So far as was ever known, there was no motive for this strange suicide. The Major was wealthy; happy in his domestic relations; his wife was a most charming woman; and he had a charming family of children. It was, in fact, one of those human mysteries which puzzle the student and the psychologist. I never heard how the writer of the criticism I have referred to felt when he read the account of this suicide, but I should think it ought to have taken some of the conceit out of him.

The case I am about to record is scarcely less remarkable than that of the Major's suicide, although it belongs rather to the category of serio-comedy than tragedy. For reasons that I am sure will be appreciated, I must substitute fictitious for real names, as I have no wish to wound the susceptibilities of those concerned.

The affair happened soon after I had joined the Glasgow staff, and it enabled me—may I modestly say—to distinguish myself. In fact, I am disposed to think that that very case was the means of arousing in me those faculties which, by subsequent careful training and development, have enabled me to unravel so many criminal mysteries.

It was a morning in the month of June when I was sent for by my chief, who said—

“Donovan, we've received notice of the loss of some valuable jewellery from the house of a Mr. Farquharson at the West End, and I should like you to look into the matter, and see what you can do. According to the information we have received, the jewellery is valued at

about ten thousand pounds. No doubt it's a mere commonplace robbery, and we shall easily lay hold of the thief."

Although I did not tell him so, I did not by any means share my chief's opinion as to its being a commonplace robbery, for if the value of the stolen property was rightly appraised, it was far removed from commonplace. That is, no mere petty pilferer would fly at such high game as ten thousand pounds' worth of jewellery. For it is one thing to steal it, and another to dispose of it. The difficulties of disposing of very valuable property are so considerable that mere dabblers in the game of thieving content themselves with such things as will readily find a market without attracting special attention. Valuable articles have to be traded through the professional "fence," who is almost invariably a Jew. Why a Jew more than any other class should take so readily to this unlawful calling it is difficult to say, but that he does is a fact known to the police the world over; and his cunning is so great, and his mode of business carried on with such secrecy, that it is no easy matter to bring the "fence" to justice. But I have had the good fortune in my time to hale several notorious "fences" before the magistrates, and have them sentenced to long terms of imprisonment.

As soon as I could get away, I lost no time in going out to Mr. Farquharson's house, which was a large self-contained one, standing in a fashionable square in the west of Glasgow.

Mr. Farquharson was typical of his class. He was uneducated, but shrewd and intelligent. His mother, as I found out, had been a cook, and his father a hawker, although Mr. Farquharson aspired to be of good descent, and had even assumed a crest and motto.

He had begun life as a labouring boy in an iron foundry, and by long years of frugality, scraping, and perseverance he had become an iron-master himself, and had amassed a very large fortune. He had married somewhat late in life, the object of his choice being a lady in the best sense of the word, although a penniless one. Possibly, therefore, in accepting Mr. Farquharson, she had an eye to his banking account. Being very ostentatious and fond of display, Mr. Farquharson had presented his wife with some very valuable jewellery, amongst them being the stolen brilliants, of which I shall speak more in detail directly.

The Farquharsons had two children, a son and a daughter, the son being about twenty, and the daughter three-and-twenty. Young James Farquharson had been a very wild youth, and had given his parents a great deal of anxiety. He had plunged into all sorts of extravagances and dissipation, but had given up his bad ways and had become quite a model son. Of course, I did not learn all this at once, but bit by bit as I endeavoured to solve the mystery in connection with the robbery.

Miss Farquharson—"Bella," as her parents fondly called her—was in every way an exemplary daughter. Daughters are almost invariably better than sons. The day before we received notice of the robbery Bella had been married. The wedding, which took place at the house of the bride's father in accordance with Scotch custom, had been a very grand affair; for, as Mr. Farquharson had said, Bella being his only daughter, he was resolved that her marriage should be a thing to be remembered, and—as I was informed—there had been no wedding like it in that part of Glasgow for a very long time. The display of plate,

jewels, and grand dresses was dazzling ; and, in accordance with her husband's wishes, Mrs. Farquharson had put on her most costly jewels. Amongst these were a magnificent necklace of the purest brilliants, said to have an intrinsic value of six thousand guineas, and a bracelet and four rings valued at another four thousand pounds.

The lady wore this little fortune about her person all day and far into the night, for after the bride and bridegroom had departed on their honeymoon tour there was a ball, which did not break up until two o'clock in the morning. When Mrs. Farquharson retired to her room she was—as she told me—thoroughly fagged out, and being too tired to pay attention to anything beyond getting into bed as speedily as possible, she placed her jewels on the dressing-table, instead of locking them up in a little safe that stood in her boudoir, as it was her habit to do.

The following morning about ten o'clock she had a cup of tea and some toast brought to her by her maid, and after that she went to sleep again for another couple of hours, so that it was high noon before she rose. It was not, however, until she had nearly completed her toilet that she suddenly remembered she had left her valuable jewellery on the dressing-table, but on looking for it her alarm and astonishment may be imagined when she found that it had gone. Thinking she might have been mistaken, she rushed to the safe to see if she had not put it there. But her search was fruitless. The brilliants had disappeared. She immediately summoned her husband, and acquainted him with her loss. To him it was a tremendous shock, for he loved money for money's sake, and could not bear to lose anything. The room was searched high

and low, but with no other result than to make it absolutely certain that the jewels were gone.

"Who has taken them?" was the question that naturally occurred to Mr. and Mrs. Farquharson, and as an investigation proved that the house had not been broken into, it was perhaps no less natural under the circumstances that the answer to the question was, "Some of the servants must have stolen them."

Having come to this conclusion in his own mind, Mr. Farquharson enjoined his wife to keep her own counsel; and while he undertook to keep an eye on the servants, and see that none of them left the house, he called his son and gave him instructions to hurry to the station and request that a detective might be sent up at once. Thus it was that I was brought on to the scene. I found Mr. Farquharson a fussy, loud-speaking man, much given to dogmatism, and inclined to quarrel with any one who differed from him.

"Now, you know, Mr. Donovan," he exclaimed, after he had told me the story of the loss, "there's not the slightest doubt that the jewels have been stolen by some of the servants, and you will have to search all their boxes. I'll have every man Jack of them assembled in the drawing-room, and lock them in, and then we can go round and turn their boxes out; and you may depend upon it I'll make it hot for the thief."

"No doubt you will, sir," I remarked a little ironically. "You must permit me, however, to investigate this matter in my own way. The plan you suggest is not one that recommends itself to me."

"What the devil, then, are you going to do?" he demanded irascibly.

"Endeavour to discover the thief in a more scientific way," I answered. "Do you suppose, sir, that the

person who has been bold enough to steal ten thousand pounds' worth of diamonds would hide them in his or her box? It does not strike me as being in the least degree likely, for any one who would do that would surely be an idiot."

My argument, however, did not convince Mr. Farquharson. His pigheadedness asserted itself, and he said that he should carry out his plan, and if I did not choose to help him his son would. He accordingly sent a message for his son to come to him, but he was informed that "Mr. James" was out. He thereupon said that all the servants were to assemble in the drawing-room immediately.

Leaving two stablemen and a coachman—who slept over the stables and away from the house—out of the calculation, there were nine servants in all, including the butler, a footman, and Mrs. Farquharson's maid; and in obedience to their master's order, they all assembled in the drawing-room, whither I accompanied Mr. Farquharson, for I saw it was no use opposing him.

"Look here," he exclaimed to them coarsely and bluntly, "your mistress's diamonds have been stolen during the night, and as the house has not been broken into, the thief must be amongst you. This person"—pointing to me—"is a detective, and we are going to search all your boxes."

This sudden announcement was like a bomb-shell falling in the midst of the little group of people, and I saw the look of consternation that swept over their faces; and loud and emphatic were the indignant protests that broke out as the finger of suspicion thus pointed to them indiscriminately. The lady's-maid was a Miss Jane Seymour, and as she had had access to

her mistress's room, and had taken the tea up at ten o'clock, I scrutinized her keenly. She was a good-looking woman of about eight-and-twenty, and of staid, ladylike manners. I was informed that she had been in the service for two years, and had come from London, where for seven years she had been in the service of a lady of title, and bore a very high character. She was not indifferent to the attention I bestowed upon her, and when the others had made their protest she said quietly and with a certain dignity that rather impressed me---

"This is an unfortunate circumstance for me, but I can only say solemnly I know nothing whatever about the jewels, and you may search my boxes at once."

"And mine! And mine!" exclaimed the servants, one after another.

Although I noticed that Miss Seymour became pale as she spoke, her manner and tone were apparently very sincere, and I confess that I was impressed in her favour. Of course, Mr. Farquharson insisted that the boxes should be searched, and that was done, but equally of course with the result I had predicted—the missing jewels were not found. Then a systematic search was made throughout the house, every hole and corner was looked into, cupboards were examined, carpets turned up, and the most likely and unlikely places scrutinized, but with no different result. The jewels were not forthcoming. Then I took the opportunity to have a little conversation myself with the various servants, so framing certain questions I put to them that they contained the potentialities of eliciting a clue if the guilty person was amongst the questioned. But I could not obtain the faintest justification for harbouring suspicion against any particular person. They were all greatly

distressed and agitated, Miss Seymour particularly so, and she wept bitterly.

"It is dreadful," she said, "to rest under such a shadow as this, and I pray and trust, sir, that you will be successful in bringing the thief to justice."

"I hope I shall," I answered, really sympathizing with her; but, nevertheless, I deemed it my duty to do all I could to learn something of her movements and acquaintances.

When Mr. Farquharson found that the jewels were not forthcoming, as he had quite expected they would be when the boxes were searched, he exhibited great distress and anger, and with strange insipience he wanted to give all the servants into custody; but, as I pointed out to him, that would be a very serious step indeed, and render him liable to actions for false imprisonment, which might cost him a very great deal of money.

"Well, then, what are you going to do?" he demanded brusquely.

"I cannot do impossibilities," I answered; "and not having the power of a wizard, I cannot lay my hand on the thief without something to guide me. But the fact is, if I am to take this matter up, I must be allowed to pursue my own course, and whatever ability I possess I will exert to the utmost to recover your property. I cannot say more now."

This did not seem to satisfy Mr. Farquharson, who, being excited about his loss, was unreasonable and illogical; and he took upon himself to tell the servants that he would give any one of them the sum of two hundred pounds for information that would lead to the detection of the thief. I offered no objection to this, although I did not think for a moment it would result in any discovery; and the reason I thought so was,

that I felt certain the thief—if amongst the servants—would be too cunning and cautious to betray himself to his fellow-servants, and the mere fact of the reward being offered would but serve to put him on his guard, and make him act with increased caution, for he would know that all the eyes in the household would be sharpened by the offer of the reward, and the slightest suspicious movement on his part would in all probability lead to his betrayal. With this in my mind I should have been prepared to wager heavily that the offer would have no effect. At the same time, I could not be indifferent to the mystery that surrounded the case. The thorough search we had instituted had quite failed to give us the faintest clue; and I had seen nothing, absolutely nothing, in the conduct and bearing of any of the servants that warranted me in supposing the criminal was amongst them. Consequently I could not shut my eyes to the difficulties that confronted me.

Mr. Farquharson had so thoroughly made up his mind at the outset that the thief would be found amongst his servants that his irritation and annoyance at the failure were very great; and in proportion as the chances of discovery seemed to lessen, his anxiety rose, and the fear of an entire failure to regain the lost property excited him to a remarkable degree, so that he seemed disposed to quarrel with every one in the house, and regarded me, as it seemed, as if I were his enemy.

“Although we haven’t found anything,” he exclaimed, “I’m convinced one of the servants is the thief, and you ought to be able to do something to detect him.”

I smiled at this, but did not think it worth while to enter into any argument with a person so utterly

unreasonable as he was. But I contented myself with asking if there was any doubt about his wife having her jewels when she retired to her room. This led to the lady being called into the discussion, and she was most emphatic in her declaration that when she went to her bedroom at two o'clock in the morning she had the jewels with her, and placed them on the dressing-table.

"And did you lock your bedroom door?" I asked.

"Yes, certainly."

"And how did your maid obtain entrance in the morning when she brought the tea up?"

"By means of a duplicate key which she is allowed to have."

"Had no one else access to the room?"

"No one."

"Of that there is no doubt?"

"Not the slightest."

"Did the maid lock the door when she retired after giving you tea?"

"Yes; well, I think she did, but am not sure. We had better ask her."

I will frankly state that my views with regard to Miss Seymour had undergone some change on account of what I had just heard from Mrs. Farquharson. Here was a young woman who had privileged access to her mistress's room by means of a duplicate key, and as she now came to us in obedience to a message that she was wanted, I regarded her for the first time with something like suspicion. She appeared to me, too, to be a little agitated and flurried as she came into our presence, and I fixed my eyes upon her, trying to divine something of her thoughts.

"Will you tell me, Miss Seymour," I asked, "if you locked Mrs. Farquharson's door after you had been into her room to take the tea?"

"No, I did not," she answered, without the slightest hesitation, and seeming to regain her composure.

"Did you leave it unlocked intentionally?"

"Yes. I had no object in locking it at that hour in the morning, for I am aware that when Mrs. Farquharson is not up by the time Mr. James is ready to go to business, he goes to her room to say good morning."

Turning to Mrs. Farquharson, I asked her if her son had visited her as usual that morning, and she told me that he had not, as he was taking a day's holiday from his business.

"And do you know if any one entered the room after Miss Seymour had retired?"

"I don't think so. But the fact is, I fell asleep."

"It was therefore quite possible for some one to have entered without your being aware of it?"

"Quite possible."

"Do you know, Miss Seymour, if the jewels were on the table when you went into the room?" I asked.

"I absolutely do not."

"Do you attend your mistress at night when she retires?"

"As a rule I do, but I did not do so last night owing to the late hour, for at midnight she told me I could go to bed, and I went."

"Now, tell me, Miss Seymour," I said pointedly and with intentional abruptness, "have you formed any theory as to how these jewels have been stolen?"

"No, certainly not," she exclaimed, growing excited

again and bursting into tears. "How could I possibly do that? I haven't an opinion in the matter."

"Well, I tell you what it is, Miss Seymour," cried Mr. Farquharson coarsely, "I have an opinion, and a very decided one—and that is that you are the thief, and I intend to give you in charge!"

With a wild, hysterical scream she staggered back to a sofa, and fell in a heap, covering her face with her hands and weeping piteously.

"God pity me!" she moaned, "I am innocent—innocent!" Then, with a sudden upspringing, she exclaimed to Mr. Farquharson—"I deny with scorn and indignation your base accusation; and if you give me in charge, as you threaten, it will be an expensive day's work for you."

It was a very painful scene to me, and at that moment my own mind seemed to be quite neutral in the matter—that is, I was without an opinion as to either her guilt or her innocence. But one thing I was emphatic about, and that was that there was no evidence then to justify taking the young woman to prison. Mr. Farquharson, however, had come to a decision in the illogical way which seemed to be characteristic of him, and with his dogged insistence he would not budge from his standpoint. He was unmoved alike by her distress, her protests, or her pleadings. Indeed, the more she protested, the more irritated he became, and at last, addressing me in a peremptory tone, he said—

"Mr. Donovan, you are a servant of the law, and must do your duty."

I looked at him inquiringly, and remarked—

"You really mean that I am to take her in charge?"

"Of course I do. She is the one person in the house

against whom suspicion most strongly points. If she likes to confess the truth and restore the diamonds, I'll not prosecute her."

"That implies a decided belief that she is the thief," I said.

"It is scandalous and abominable!" moaned out Miss Seymour, in broken tones. "I know nothing of these diamonds. I am not a thief, therefore I have nothing to confess."

"Well," remarked Mr. Farquharson snappishly, "if you can establish your innocence before a magistrate, all right and good; but it will take a lot to convince me that you have not had a hand in this business. And it certainly will be to your advantage to make a clean breast of it. I am not vindictive, and don't wish to punish you. All I wish is the return of my property."

In spite of his assertion, his vindictiveness was only too apparent; and seeing that he would not listen to reason, and as I was desirous to put an end to the painful scene, I said to Miss Seymour—

"I shall have to ask you, miss, to accompany me to the station. I will respect your feelings as much as possible, and you shall go in a cab. And I only hope your innocence will be completely established."

She gave way to intense grief, sobbing bitterly, and at that moment the door opened and Mr. Farquharson's son entered. He was not prepossessing as to his looks, and wore that faded expression peculiar to fast young men who indulge in late hours and dissipation.

"Hullo! what's this?" he exclaimed, as he took in the situation, and saw Miss Seymour's distress.

"I've given the lass in charge," answered his father, "on suspicion of having stolen your mother's diamonds."

"But have you any proof?" asked the young man with a strange eagerness, while his pale face seemed to me to grow paler.

"No, but all the circumstances point to her."

James bit his lip and knit his brow. He seemed to reflect for a moment or two, then said—

"Would it not be as well to be sure of your ground? If she should prove to be innocent, it will be an ugly business for you."

"Oh, Mr. James, I am innocent—I am innocent—God in heaven knows it!" exclaimed Miss Seymour, with a passionate outstretching of the hands towards him, as though to him she looked for help, for pity, for succour. But the son's interference had made the father still more irascible, and he said angrily—

"Look here, Mr. Donovan, put an end to this matter and take the girl away."

"Very well, sir," I answered, "the responsibility is on your own shoulders entirely. Perhaps you will be good enough to instruct one of your servants to accompany this young lady to her room so that she may attire herself?"

My request was complied with, and Miss Seymour went to her room, accompanied by one of the chambermaids. In about ten minutes she came down again dressed in a large cloak, and with her face entirely muffled by a thick veil. A cab was procured, and as I handed her in and got in beside her a strange thought began to take shape in my mind.

During the whole of my way to the station Miss Seymour protested her innocence between her sobs and moans. She seemed utterly crushed with grief, and I thought to myself that if she was not innocent then she was one of the most perfect actresses I had ever had to

deal with. There could be no disputing the fact that, when all the circumstances of the case were taken into consideration, suspicion that Miss Seymour was the criminal seemed to be justified. For not only was she in possession of a key to the door, but, so far as could then be determined, she was the only person who had been in the room. Now, if Mrs. Farquharson was correct in her statement that she had placed the jewels on her dressing-table, it followed that, whoever stole them, had gained entrance by the doorway. I had given heed to the window—a somewhat unusually large one overlooking the back garden, and some fourteen feet or so above the glass roof of a conservatory that adjoined the breakfast-room—and had not considered it necessary to construct any theory that the window had afforded the thief the means of ingress. Firstly, because a long ladder resting on the conservatory roof would have been indispensable; and secondly, because the heavy window could not have been lifted from the outside without very considerable difficulty and noise. The thief, therefore, had entered by the doorway, and must presumably have been staying in the house, since the house had not been broken into. The only people sleeping in the house during the night of the robbery were the domestics, Miss Seymour, Mr. and Mrs. Farquharson, and their son. On that particular night Mr. Farquharson had not slept in his wife's bedroom, but in one at the top of the house, and adjoining his son's bedroom.

A marshalling of all these facts in logical review led me to the unavoidable conclusion that I must seek the thief amongst the occupants of the household; and the weight of the evidence, so far as it could be cursorily gathered, was decidedly against Miss Seymour; and

yet I will state without hesitation, that I had strong doubts about her being the criminal. If I were asked to give a reason for this, I should have to say that it arose from some indefinable sense—some keen intuition which refused to be subjected to the ordinary processes of ratiocination. Still, it was my duty—my bounden duty—to leave no stone unturned in my search for evidence against the prisoner, which, by the converse, meant that, failing evidence being forthcoming against her, her innocence would be established.

My inquiries were necessarily directed in the first instance to Jane Seymour's antecedents, and I could not find one single black spot against her. All her people were highly respectable, and every one who knew her was loud in her praise. Her former employer, Lady ——, was enthusiastic about her, and she said that she believed the charge against the poor girl was an infamous one. Of course the relatives of the accused—there were two brothers and three sisters and the mother—were bowed down with grief, the mother especially, for she was well on into eighty years of age, and the shock caused by the news of her daughter's arrest brought on a serious illness.

The result of my inquiries was *nil* so far as they told against the prisoner, who was liberated on bail, which was readily forthcoming.

Of the other members composing Mr. Farquharson's household among whom the guilty person might probably be found, I selected one as calling for close observation more than any of the others. That one was *young James Farquharson*. I have stated that a strange thought began to take shape in my mind as I conveyed Miss Seymour to the station, and the thought was that James was the guilty person. This thought had sprung into

existence owing to something peculiar in his manner and expression when he entered the room and found the maid accused of the robbery. The peculiarity might not have attracted the attention of any one unaccustomed to make the human face a study. But it was my business to watch for signs where others would not have dreamed of them, and I saw such signs in connection with young Farquharson that my suspicions grew almost in spite of myself.

Perhaps I need scarcely say that I did not mention these suspicions to a living soul. His father and all the servants were loud in their expressions that Jane Seymour must have committed the crime; and so innately cruel and uncharitable is human nature that Jane Seymour's fellow-servants did not hesitate to say that they were sure she must be the thief, for had she not access to the room, and had she not a key to the door?

"It's the likes of her," observed one female of the household, "what brings us poor slaveys into suspicion. She with her stuck-up airs and pretensions to be a lady, while all the time she was a thief! I only hope as they'll give it to her hot."

As this remark—which was more conspicuous for its uncharitableness than for its correct grammar—was addressed to me, I ventured to remonstrate by saying that no one had a right to call Miss Seymour a thief until the law had proved her to be one, and that suspicion wasn't proof.

In speaking of the servants as being generally disposed to condemn Miss Seymour, I ought to have made one exception in the person of Mr. Alex. Dobbie, the butler. At first he offered no opinion, but I saw that he was much troubled about something. At last

he took me into his confidence, and told me he had been making love to Miss Seymour, to whom he was greatly attached.

“And do you think she is guilty?” I asked.

The question caused him a keen pang, and he answered with hesitation—

“I do not like to think her so—indeed, I cannot believe she is—and yet circumstances look black against her.”

“They do,” I said; and then, as a crumb of comfort, for the poor fellow was greatly cut up, I added, “but I have known cases where things have looked very much blacker against an accused person who has subsequently been proved perfectly guiltless.”

This had the desired effect, and he said—

“I’ll not believe her guilty, poor thing! and I’ll pray that she may come out of this terrible ordeal unscathed, for she is to be my wife.”

Mr. Farquharson took a very different view from that taken by his butler, and he would not admit that there was room for any doubt of Miss Seymour’s guilt. He pronounced her guilty, in fact, before she was tried; and notwithstanding that, in spite of all exertions, we had failed to get a tittle of evidence against her. His want of reason in the matter surprised me greatly, because he was accounted a shrewd and far-seeing man; and that he must have been possessed of these qualities was pretty evident, otherwise he could not have succeeded as he had done in building up his great business. But the fact was, he was an exceedingly greedy man, and the loss of the jewels so preyed on his mind that he was unable to reason properly in the matter, and consequently was unjust. I made not the slightest attempt to disabuse him, for I saw the uselessness of it; but I felt that if the suspicions I had formed should prove to be

justified, his pride would receive a terrible fall, and he would be punished for his uncharitableness of heart.

Silently and persistently in the pursuit of my object I endeavoured to track and trace the career of young James Farquharson from the time of his leaving school down to the night of the ball on the occasion of his sister's marriage, and I learned little that was very creditable to him. His chief ambition seemed to have been to be considered one of the fastest of fast young men, and the class of companions he chose was as conspicuous for lack of brains as he himself was. Knowing as I did how difficult it was for stolen jewels of great value to be disposed of, I kept a particularly sharp look-out for any indication that an attempt was being made to sell them. It did not occur to me that James himself—assuming he was the thief—would endeavour to dispose of them, as he would have to be very obtuse not to see how great would be the risk; and the theory I worked out was that he had a confederate—perhaps more than one. But my investigations did not reveal that he had of late been unusually flush of money, and so I concluded that he was either keeping the jewels well concealed, or they had already been smuggled out of the country. There was hardly a pawnbroker or jeweller of any consequence in the kingdom that had not been apprised of the robbery, so that that market was virtually closed so far as Great Britain was concerned; but I knew only too well that in France, Belgium, and Holland there were innumerable channels for the disposal of stolen property, especially diamonds. Holland is perhaps the greatest sinner in this respect, for Jew “fences” abound there, and they are always on the alert for spoil. It is no unusual thing for some of these rascals, as soon as they

hear of a robbery of valuable property in Britain, to cross the Channel and get in touch with the thieves. If the diamonds had been offered for sale anywhere in the United Kingdom it is almost certain we should have got some information, and the fact that no such information was forthcoming proved that no attempt had been made either to pawn them or to dispose of them through the medium of a jeweller. Of course, there were plenty of "fences" in the kingdom, and no doubt unprincipled shopkeepers, who for the sake of gain would have risked trafficking in the diamonds, so that our notifying the most likely people was only a partial safeguard.

While attempts were being made to unravel the mystery—for mystery it certainly was—Jane Seymour was brought up for trial, as the charge could not be held over her head indefinitely; but, as no evidence was forthcoming, a verdict of not guilty was returned, and she was discharged. She had evidently suffered very acutely, and it had left its traces on her face. Alex. Dobbie was greatly rejoiced at her release, and accompanied her to her home in London, in order to arrange for their marriage. On the other hand, Mr. Farquharson was greatly incensed, and talked of there having been a miscarriage of justice, for, in spite of the verdict, he was quite unconvinced of Miss Seymour's innocence.

"It is true she has been acquitted," he said, "but that is only because there was no evidence to convict. In my mind, however, it does not prove her guiltless."

I tried to convince him that this was illogical reasoning, and quite opposed to all principles of equity, but he would not be convinced. The loss of the jewellery still preyed heavily on his mind, and he did

not hesitate to hint that I was lacking in both zeal and ability as I had failed to discover the stolen property. Neither his temper nor his manners were improved when he was threatened with an action on behalf of Miss Seymour for false imprisonment. And it was only when he began to realize that if the case came into court he would have to pay pretty heavily that he tried to compromise the matter by offering a hundred pounds, which was scornfully rejected. Then he increased his offer to two hundred, with a like result ; and, after much haggling, he paid six hundred pounds, which was only wrung from him by a fear that a judge would compel him to pay more. It was, indeed, a bitter pill for him to swallow, but he was rightly served, for, had he not been so precipitate, he would have waited before charging Miss Seymour to see if anything like tangible evidence was forthcoming.

During all this time I had in no way relaxed my exertions ; indeed, I was spurred to renewed efforts by the taunts Mr. Farquharson levelled at me. I had come now to regard his son as the actual criminal, and I aimed at getting some clue, by following up which I might bring the crime home to him. I had already learned enough of James Farquharson's mode of life to feel assured that he had sacrificed all principle, for no man with any regard for his honour would have acted as he had done. His record was about as shameless as it could be, but I could get no evidence that he had actually outraged the law.

Six months passed, and I was still without any clue to the missing brilliants. I could not conceive it possible that they had been stolen in order that they might be worn by some one connected with the thief, because that would have been to court certain detection.

They had therefore been taken in order that they might be converted into money ; but I was disposed to think no attempt had yet been made to dispose of them, the thief being evidently deterred by the publicity given to the case. It is almost needless to say, perhaps, that Mr. Farquharson was quite unable to reconcile himself to the loss ; and on the occasion of my last seeing him he had railed at me so violently, and was really so abusive, that I could not help retorting—

“ Perhaps, sir, you may find some day that the thief is more nearly connected with you than you would like to suppose.”

“ What do you mean ? ” he asked, with a gasp, while a look of keen anxiety swept over his face, as if he had divined my meaning.

I declined, however, to explain my meaning or say anything more on the subject, and left him to his own reflections. What these reflections were may be gathered from the fact that two or three weeks later he sent me a note asking me to call upon him ; and when I did so he said—

“ Mr. Donovan, I have decided, and my wife is in accord with me, to ask you not to trouble any further in this matter of the robbery. Let the things go, and may they do the person who has got them much good ! Fortunately, I am rich enough to replace them, and I am going up to London in a few days to order a fresh set of brilliants for my wife.”

Of course, I was surprised—more than surprised—at this strange request, but it was confirmation strong to me that my suspicions about the son were correct. His tone and manner towards me were very different from what they had been on the last occasion when I saw him, and he pressed me to accept a by no means inconsiderable

douceur, which I indignantly refused. The motives for his strange conduct were more fully apparent when it subsequently came to my ears that his son had gone to America. As a matter of fact, he had been sent out of the country. I was very greatly annoyed to think that, while a poor and innocent young woman of spotless reputation had had to go through the crushing ordeal of being suspected and imprisoned as a thief, the real criminal had escaped justice by the influence of his father's wealth. I resolved, however, that the truth should be known if I could only get corroborative evidence, and that was forthcoming much sooner than I anticipated.

It was about seven months after the robbery that I one day received a message from a highly respectable jeweller in Edinburgh, asking me to call and see him, as he thought he had some of the stolen brilliants in his possession. As soon as ever I could make it convenient, I went through to Edinburgh, and waited on the jeweller, whom I will call Pritchard, who was in business in Prince's Street. He told me that he had been away for some weeks, and that during his absence a young and well-dressed, lady-like looking woman had come into the shop two or three times to make small purchases of low-priced jewellery, and that on one occasion she offered for sale two very fine brilliants, which the manager purchased. Soon after she came back again with three more brilliants, which were also purchased by the manager. She stated that she had a few more for sale, and she would bring them shortly; and her explanation was that the stones had formed part of a tiara which had belonged to her mother, but that, having no use for them, she wished to realize their value, and invest the money in other jewellery. The price

paid for the stones was three hundred and seventy-two pounds six shillings.

When Mr. Pritchard got back to his business and heard of the transaction his suspicions were aroused, particularly as the stones were exceptionally fine ones. But the manager had not suspected that anything was wrong, although he knew that his employer had been notified of the robbery. It is such carelessness as this which often thwarts the police in their endeavours to trap evil-doers. Of course, there was no certainty at that moment that these stones were a portion of those stolen from Mr. Farquharson, though I strongly suspected that they were. It was therefore arranged that in the event of the lady coming again she was to be followed and her address discovered. Having waited in Edinburgh without any result, I was compelled to go back to Glasgow; but a fortnight later I received a telegram from Mr. Pritchard requesting me to call on him without delay.

That same evening found me once more in "Auld Reekie," and I learned that the day previous the lady had been to the shop and offered for sale a number of most beautiful stones. Mr. Pritchard himself had attended to her and asked her to leave the stones for a few days until he was able to more carefully examine them. But this she declined to do, and took them away. As soon as she left the shop the assistant set off to follow her, and she was tracked to a house on the South Side.

I no longer had the slightest doubt in my own mind that the stones offered to Mr. Pritchard were part of Mrs. Farquharson's missing brilliants, and I felt that the scent was now getting warm. In spite of Mr. Farquharson's request that I should take no further

interest in the matter, I was determined to get to the bottom of the mystery, for I felt that my own reputation was in some measure at stake. Mr. Farquharson had all but charged me with being incapable, although my suspicions about his son seemed, from what had taken place, to be well founded; for on no other hypothesis could his desire to hush the matter up be accounted for. But quite apart from every other consideration, I did not deem it consistent with my duty to let a criminal escape punishment if I could bring him to justice. I therefore made it my business to know more of the lady, who was evidently in possession of some at least of the stolen property.

I found that she was, or professed to be, a married woman, and was living with her husband under the name of Reay. They occupied furnished apartments in the house, where they had been living for two months, and were supposed to be a newly married couple. The husband did not do any work, and the opinion was that they were well off. These little circumstances were of course of considerable significance, and I felt that I was on the eve of a revelation. Having convinced myself that Mrs. Reay and her husband were suspicious characters, I waited on them one afternoon, and sent a request by the landlady of the house that I wished to see Mrs. Reay. After waiting for some little time, Mr. Reay put in an appearance. He was a very young man; not more than one-and-twenty, and very boyish in appearance. He was delicate and fragile-looking; and from his manner and speech he seemed to have been well brought up. He inquired what my business with his wife was, and said that she was very unwell and lying down.

I told him that my business was urgent, and that it was very important I should see her.

"But you cannot see her!" he exclaimed, a little sharply. "She is poorly."

"So you *say*," I answered, laying stress on the word "say." "But if she cannot come to me, I must go to her."

"What do you mean?" he asked, with flashing eyes, and a look of genuine indignation in his face.

"I mean that I demand to see her in the name of the law."

I saw the colour fade from his cheeks as he echoed my words—

"In the name of the law?"

"Yes."

"Surely you are either mad or drunk?"

"I am neither the one nor the other. I am an officer of the law; and as I have every reason to believe she is in possession of stolen diamonds, I shall arrest her."

He put his hand to his forehead and fairly staggered, and with a pitiable cowed look he stared at me in a dazed sort of way, and then in a broken voice he said—

"Good God! I begin to see clearly now. I have been deceived."

I felt convinced that he was not acting; and as he seemed very simple, I asked him how long he had been married.

"About five months," he said.

"Where were you married?"

"Here, in Edinburgh."

"Where does your wife come from?"

"From Glasgow."

"Have you known her long?"

"No, not very long."

"She is in possession of some diamonds, is she not?"

"Yes; but she told me that they were some she had had for years, and that they had originally belonged to her mother."

"And you have believed that story?" I asked, with a smile.

"Of course I have believed it. Until quite recently I have had no reason to suspect that my wife was playing me false."

"Then you have suspected her?"

"Well—yes, within the last few days I have, for she has contradicted herself; and though she told me that she only had about a dozen diamonds, I have recently discovered that she was in possession of a quantity."

"Had she those diamonds when you married her?"

"For aught I know to the contrary, she had."

"Well, now, Mr. Reay," I said peremptorily, "please take me to your wife, for I *must* see her."

He hesitated for some moments, and appeared to be greatly distressed, but at last said, "Well, come this way," and he led me to an upper room where he expected to see his wife, but she was not there.

He rang the bell for the landlady, and made inquiries, but could not get any information, and a search revealed the fact that she had left the house. She had evidently scented danger, and had cleared out. As I was not sure, of course, that the husband had not connived at her flight, I told him I should arrest him on suspicion of his being a party to the robbery of the jewels.

He begged and prayed, almost on his knees, that I would not do so. He told me that he was the son of a retired and wealthy gentleman of the highest respectability; that he had married his wife clandestinely, and

only visited her occasionally; that if his father knew of the marriage he would disinherit him. I asked him if his real name was Reay, and he said no. So I told him I should take him and report him in the name of Reay, and after inquiries, if it was found that no charge could be sustained against him, he would be discharged.

With a sigh he resigned himself to his fate, and quietly accompanied me to the station, and I then turned my attention to arresting his wife. Her description was circulated amongst the force, and a strict watch kept on the railway stations, and that very night she was arrested as she was about to leave by the London train.

She was a very handsome, stylish young woman, fashionably dressed, and wearing a profusion of jewellery. In a handbag she carried a quantity of brilliants were found, and a bracelet intact. That bracelet I at once recognized from the description as the one that had been stolen from Mrs. Farquharson.

She averred that the brilliants had been given to her by James Farquharson, and for reasons that are obvious I believed this statement was true. The next morning I telegraphed to Mr. Farquharson, and requested him to come through to Edinburgh in order that he might identify his property, but he took no notice of this request. Mrs. Reay adhered doggedly to her story, and when she heard that her husband was under arrest, she declared that he had had nothing to do with the diamonds. After she had been in prison two or three days, and in order to screen herself from the consequences of the robbery, she made the following extraordinary statement:—

She had been married to young James Farquharson for nearly three years, and as he had tired of her and

was very anxious to get rid of her, she had undertaken to leave the country for good if he would give her two thousand pounds; and on his failing to do that she threatened to go to his father's house and claim kinship with him. At last James brought her the brilliants, which he said his mother had given to him in lieu of money, and he made her promise him that she would go abroad to dispose of them. She had, however, come to Edinburgh, where she almost immediately formed an acquaintance with young Reay, and after a few weeks, yielding to his entreaties, she married him, for she discovered that he was heir to a large property, and that his father was a wealthy man. As Reay, however, had been unable to obtain sufficient money to keep up her extravagances, she had been tempted into trying to dispose of some of the stones. When I called at her lodgings she at once suspected something was wrong, and, sending her husband to see me, she resolved on hasty flight; for, though she had not stolen the jewels, she had committed bigamy. I was enabled to corroborate this story in all its details; and as it was clear the charge of robbery could not be sustained, Reay was discharged, and the woman was indicted for bigamy and subsequently sentenced to a year's imprisonment. The jewels were restored to their lawful owner, who seemed very glad indeed to recover possession of them.

Mrs. Farquharson was painfully affected by the revelation that had been made of her son's wickedness. On my requesting her to tell me why he had been sent away, she said that he had confessed to his father that he had stolen the diamonds and given them to a woman, and he begged that no further inquiries might be made, as the disgrace to the family would be terrible. The father therefore resolved to pack him off to America,

knowing nothing then of the marriage. It was indeed a fearful blow to the family pride, and I believe that Mr. Farquharson never held his head up again. I never knew what became of James, but he must have realized during his darkened career how true it is that "the sin of the evil-doer findeth him out."

THE GILSLAND MYSTERY.

IN a lonely but most beautiful and picturesque district in the neighbourhood of Gilsland there used to stand a large old-fashioned country house. I speak in the past tense, because the house was razed to the ground some years ago. It had originally, I believe, been a farmhouse, and dated back some two, or probably three, hundred years. It had, however, to a large extent, been modernized, the barn and many of the outbuildings removed, and the place rendered fit for a gentleman's residence. There was an extensive orchard and garden, the whole enclosed by a brick wall that in many parts was overgrown with thickly matted ivy. At the bottom of the orchard was a gate in the wall, and this gave access to a miniature glen, through which flowed a little stream. The glen was a mere depression in the land, with a few rocks cropping up, and some oaks and firs scattered about. This glen was perhaps a couple of hundred yards long, but within that space it contained the elements of a perfect picture, including a waterfall, about which the ferns and bracken clustered thickly, and added to the beauty of the scene. Near this waterfall was a square building that had once been a flour-mill, but at the time I am referring to it was in a tumble-down, ramshackle condition, for it had long ceased to be used as a mill; but as it belonged to the house, it was partly filled with old rubbish. It was a singularly

picturesque little ruin, being almost entirely covered with ivy; and the wooden water-wheel, decayed and fallen to pieces, rather added to than detracted from its charm. If it stood as a monument of the mutability of human things, and tended to remind one of the silence and dust to which we must all come in due time, it was on the other hand suggestive of a dreamy repose, and begot in one a sense of restfulness on a peaceful summer day. For here the air was balmy, and only the songs of birds and the sound of falling water disturbed the solitude. It was the chosen home of bats and owls, and the birds nested in the ivy secure from marauding boys, for the glen was private property, and belonged to the owner of the house. The house, which stood well back from the road, seemed to indicate that peace and contentment were to be found within, and that the dwellers there were free from the carking cares of a fretting world. Indeed, the passer-by, if gifted with any sentiment or imagination, must have thought that those who lived in that flower-covered retreat lived an ideal life—in perfect harmony with each other and at peace with all mankind. But Dead Sea fruit is said to be filled with ashes, and the fairest-looking apple may be rotten at the core.

The owner and tenant of the house was Mr. Leonard Balders, who was considered to be very reserved and somewhat eccentric. He had purchased the property—which had been in the market for a long time—about five years before this narrative begins. The greater part of his life had been spent in the West Indies, where he was reported to have made a small fortune as a sugar-planter. In age he was sixty-two or sixty-three, and he had a Creole daughter who was thirty at

least ; and a wife—his second one—who was not more than five-and-twenty, consequently much younger than her step-daughter Jeanette. The rest of the family consisted of Mr. Balders's sister, a widow lady seventy years of age ; a little girl aged seven, a niece of Mrs. Balders ; and four servants, including a cook, and a man-servant who looked after the horse and trap and the garden, and made himself generally useful.

Mr. Balders was a very studious man, and, having an ardent love for botany, he rambled far and wide in search of plants. He was peculiarly shy and reserved, and though the ladies of his family received visitors, he never saw them and he never visited. He loved solitude, and so his neighbours said he was eccentric, and uncharitable people even called him boorish. Perhaps some early sorrow or disappointment had soured his nature and made him distrustful of his fellow-men. That was the opinion I formed during my acquaintance with him, although I never learnt anything of his past history. To me, he was a courteous, chivalrous gentleman, of rare intelligence and singular modesty. While his disposition, so far as I could form an opinion, was kindness itself. And yet there were those who spoke ill of him—so ready is the world to judge harshly of any one it is too stupid to understand.

Mr. Balders's wife was, as I have already said, a young woman—a girl as compared with him, and she looked younger than her years, for she was very fair, with a clear pink-and-white complexion and regular features. It appears that Mr. and Mrs. Balders occupied separate bedrooms. He was in the habit of rising early, especially in the summer, and sometimes, but not always, he looked into his wife's room as he went down-

stairs. He did this one June morning at five o'clock, and to his great surprise found that his wife was not there, and that the bed had not been slept in. This was so remarkable that he at once proceeded to his sister's room, and then to his daughter's, thinking it probable that for some reason of her own Mrs. Balders had slept in one or other of them, though he knew that as a rule she had an aversion to sleeping out of her own room. Not finding her as he expected, he aroused the servants, and the house was searched, but the lady could not be found. All the doors of the house were closed and bolted with the exception of the front door, which, though closed, was not bolted, and yet the man-servant, whose duty it was to see the house properly secured at night, declared that he had bolted the front door as usual before retiring to rest. If that was correct, it was pretty evident that Mrs. Balders had left by the main entrance.

Of course Mr. Balders was greatly alarmed. He caused the grounds to be searched, and messengers were sent to the village, but no tale nor tidings of the missing lady could be got. For three days the husband endured agony of mind that may be better imagined than described; and, not wishing the matter to gain any more publicity than it had already gained locally, he telegraphed for me, and I at once went down from Glasgow. Perhaps I need scarcely tell the reader that Gilsland is in Northumberland, and it is situated between Newcastle and Carlisle. It is a beautiful and peaceful region, and one would never dream of associating it with crime and mystery.

I found Mr. Balders suffering great distress, and he frankly told me that for some little time there had been differences between himself and his wife. He had felt

it his duty to remonstrate with her for what he considered undignified conduct. She went out, as he thought, too much, and associated with certain people in the neighbourhood in a way he did not think becoming.

"You know, Mr. Donovan," he proceeded, in broken tones, "the disparity of age between us is very great, and perhaps I have not made sufficient allowance for that, and the poor thing has felt lonely and dull. For, you see, her step-daughter is older than she is, and there is not much sympathy between them. I have been very foolish, I am afraid, in seeking to deprive her of the company she evidently likes. But I did it for the best—I did it for the best; for I dote upon her, and would deny her nothing that I thought was for her good. I fear, however, she has taken me too seriously, and perhaps, chafing at the restriction I sought to impose, she has run away from me. Now, you must try and find her, Mr. Donovan, and bring her back, or I shall go out of my mind."

He spoke with such deep earnestness, and was so greatly distressed, that I could not help but feel for him, though I was not disposed then to attach any serious importance to his wife's disappearance. It naturally presented itself to me as a well-worn story. An old and studious man marries a young and pretty girl, and when the honeymoon is past he is much surprised to find that his wife is not as old nor as studious as he is; and not having sucked the orange of life dry, she is not disposed to become a humdrum woman while yet in her youth. Then ensue the usual bickerings. He thinks she ought to yield submissively to his control, and she emphatically refuses. The moral of all this is—an old man should not marry a young woman.

Of course I asked Mr. Balders what relations his wife had, and where they lived. He told me that she had numerous relations, principally living in the south. Her mother, who was an invalid, lived in London, and she had a married sister also in London, and a married cousin who lived in Edinburgh with her husband.

"I suppose you have communicated with all these people?" I asked.

"No—indeed I have not."

I expressed great surprise that he had not done so, and he said that he had been very reluctant to telegraph to her mother, for in case Mrs. Balders was not there the old lady would be dreadfully alarmed. And as regards the others, he had shrunk from letting them know, as he was so dreadfully afraid of the affair getting into the papers. I told him that I thought he was morbidly sensitive, and that it would be imperatively necessary to find out if she was with any of her friends. In fact, that was the first step that necessarily occurred to me, and Mr. Balders consented to do it.

"Was there any quarrel between you the night before she disappeared?" I asked.

"No, none whatever. On the contrary, she seemed unusually affectionate when she wished me good-night."

"Has she ever threatened to go away?"

"Well, I cannot exactly say that she has. But about four months ago she went to a local ball much against my wish, and the following morning I could not help but express displeasure. She then said that if her ways did not suit me she would return to her mother's house."

In compliance with my request, Mr. Balders at once

telegraphed to the mother, and in a little while word came back that the wife was not there. I confess that I was a little surprised, as inferentially I deemed it probable that she would be there. But suddenly it occurred to me that some deceit was being practised, and I asked him pointedly if he thought the mother was speaking truly when she said her daughter was not with her.

He seemed rather indignant at the suggestion, and said he was perfectly certain she would not lend herself to any such deception.

Our telegrams to other relatives brought back the same reply; and this being so, the affair began to wear a new aspect to me, and what I was disposed to treat lightly at first now became more serious, and I began to investigate Mrs. Balders's flight with a due regard for the sequences and potentialities.

I found that when there were no visitors in the house the family retired to rest pretty early. On the night before her flight Mrs. Balders had retired at ten o'clock, or a few minutes before, and David Logan, the man-servant, locked up the house at half-past ten. Now, some time between then and five o'clock in the morning, when Mr. Balders went to her room, the lady left the house, and I could not gather from the most careful inquiries amongst all who slept under the roof that night that any one had heard the chains and bolts of the doors undone. But subsequently the little girl—Lottie Venn was her name—who slept in a small room over the doorway, with a window looking into the front garden, told me that she believed she had heard her aunt on the night she disappeared speak to a large dog that occupied a kennel at the gateway that gave access to the orchard. The dog was called Punch,

and the child said that she heard Mrs. Balders say, "Good dog, good Punch—lie down, be quiet." At first she thought she had dreamt this. But she had no doubt now it was her aunt's voice she had heard, though she could not determine at what hour it was. The distance from the steps of the front doorway to the gate where the dog's kennel was, was only a few yards, and by actual experiment I proved that any one speaking near the doorway, even in a comparatively low tone, could be heard quite well in the room.

I asked the child if she had slept a very long time after hearing her aunt's voice, and she answered that she was sure she had. From this I inferred that Mrs. Balders had probably left the house about midnight. Assuming that to be correct, where could she have gone to at that hour of the night? There was no train to be had to anywhere. Now, supposing she had driven to Carlisle, which was within ten miles, and where she could have got one of the mail-trains going north or south, she must have got the conveyance from somewhere in the district. Had it come from Gilsland the fact would have been well known in the village. But inquiries instituted both there and in Carlisle failed to elicit any information. In fact, unless she had been in league with some one in Gilsland, which there was no reason to think was the case, there was only one place where she could possibly have hired a horse and trap in the village, and that was at the hotel—but no trap had been hired there.

It certainly was strange that a lady could so effectually disappear in such a small place, where every one was known to every one else, without her movements having been observed. But so it was, and the idea of a tragedy began to take shape in my mind. I ascer-

tained that she had carried nothing off with her. Her jewellery was all intact, and her purse—containing several pounds—together with her watch and chain, were found on the dressing-table. These facts certainly pointed to unpremeditated flight, and suggested to me the feasibility of suicide; and, painful as it was, I had to put that hypothesis before Mr. Balders. It came as a shock to him, but he said he could not possibly think that she had destroyed herself, for she was of a most lively disposition, and in no sense of the word weak-minded. I told him, however, that people had been known to be suddenly seized with a suicidal mania who had never shown the slightest tendency that way before. And so far as I could see then, suicide was the most probable theory of her disappearance. Reluctantly he admitted that it was so, and we at once took steps to have the country scoured, and a large pond there was on the moorland was dragged.

By this time the excitement in the district had reached fever-height, and all sorts of strange and absurd rumours were put in circulation. People drew largely upon their imaginations and promulgated the wildest theories. Some spiteful individual expressed a strong belief that Mr. Balders had murdered his wife through jealousy, and that her body would be found buried somewhere in the grounds. Although I did not give any credence to this theory, I made certain inquiries amongst the servants to try and find if there was the slightest ground for entertaining a shade of suspicion of that kind. But the emphatic opinion was that Mr. Balders was one of the kindest-hearted of men, and would not injure a worm, and that Mrs. Balders would have been far more likely to have murdered him than he to have murdered her. **A**

likeness of the lady that was shown to me did not lead me to infer that she had murderous tendencies, though there was a certain furtiveness about the eyes that perhaps suggested she was capable of being deceitful if it served her purpose. But the portrait was that of an exceedingly pretty and attractive young woman, with a well-shaped head and a great wealth of hair. The face was a pleasant, laughing face, without, as it seemed, a shadow of sorrow in it.

For three days we prosecuted our search for miles round the country. The woods were scoured, the ditches examined, the ponds dragged, but we failed to discover the body of the missing lady; and had the body been there, it is almost certain we must have discovered it, so thorough was the search. The inference I was disposed to draw from this was that she must be alive, unless she had wandered very far afield and destroyed herself. By this time the affair had been well noised abroad, and every post brought shoals of letters from writers who seemed to have more time than brains. The most idiotic theories were suggested, and some of these busybodies kindly offered, "for a consideration," to undertake to find the body's whereabouts within twelve hours. I need scarcely say these offers were not noticed. When I had made inquiries amongst the various lunatic asylums in that part of the country without result, I was forced to take up a new trail.

By this time Mr. Balders had become almost distracted, and was seriously ill; nor was his sister any better. By the advice of his medical man, who had been called in, I refrained from questioning him, but I thought it right to question the servants whether they had ever seen anything in Mrs. Balders's conduct which

would have suggested that she had a lover. Although the generally-expressed opinion was that she was a trifle frivolous and fond of gaiety, it was not thought that she had formed an attachment for any one. But David Logan, the man-servant—who was a cautious Scot—came to me at the hotel where I was staying, in order, as he said, to make “a private communication.”

He began by saying that he was very fond of “the mistress,” and “sair reluctant” (*sic*) to say anything that might reflect on her reputation. But he thought the time had come when he must speak out.

I ventured to suggest that he ought to have spoken before if he really had anything to say that was calculated to throw light on the mystery, but he justified his silence by his rooted aversion to speak a word against his mistress, who had always shown him the greatest kindness.

“Very well,” said I; “and now what is it you have to tell me?”

“Well, sir, I think it’s about nine or ten months now past when Mistress Balders sent me to the Post Office at Carlisle, two or three times, for letters addressed to Miss Ethel Drake, which were to be called for at the Carlisle Post Office. Of course I thought it very strange, particularly as those letters were addressed in a man’s hand.”

“And what opinion did you form from that?” I asked, with some eagerness.

“That Mrs. Balders was receiving letters that she did not want her husband to know anything at all about.”

“Did she offer any explanation as to why she had letters so addressed?”

“No; but she told me when I got any letters I was

to be sure and bring them straight to her, and give them into her own hand."

"Did you not think that strange?"

"Well, yes, I did. And one day, I mind of posting a letter for her, which she said I was to be sure not to let any one see."

"To whom was that letter addressed?"

"Well, I'm awfully sorry that I can't remember the full name. But it was Alfred something, Esquire, and the address was a ship in Liverpool."

This statement seemed to let in a little ray of light through the darkness, and I urged him to try and tax his memory to remember both the name of the person and the ship. But though he did this, he failed to remember them. I asked him whether he thought she kept up the correspondence, and he was of opinion that she did, for she used to drive over to Carlisle frequently in the dogcart.

I began now to seriously think that there was a lover in the case, and that the silly lady had eloped with him. From inquiries I made at the Carlisle Post Office, there was no doubt that she had long been in the habit of having letters addressed there to Miss Ethel Drake. For the Post Office people recognized Mrs. Balders from the description and from her likeness as the lady who called for the letters.

It seemed from these circumstances pretty evident that she had gone off with some one, and I thought confirmation of this might be forthcoming if her letters and papers were overhauled, and I resolved to speak to Mr. Balders on the subject, painful as the duty was. But before doing so, I deemed it better to see the doctor and take his advice.

"Certainly," said the doctor, "the matter ought to

be investigated; for though I have not mentioned it before for obvious reasons, I am disposed to think from what I have seen of the lady that it is a case of elopement. She was a very attractive young woman, full of life and animal spirits; and I am sure she found the quiet, dull country life of this place irksome, while she had very little of her husband's society. It was surely a case of May and December; and while he was trustful, doting, and confiding, she could not reconcile herself to the habits and humdrum existence of old age. However, before speaking to Mr. Balders, we will wait a day or two, for he is very weak and excited, and must be kept quiet."

Of course I had no other alternative but to acquiesce in this, although I began to think it was no longer a case in which I could interfere, unless the husband wished to employ my services to trace the lady with a view to divorce proceedings. But that evening, as I sat in my hotel meditatively enjoying a *post-prandial* cigar, David Logan rushed excitedly into my presence. He was as pale as a ghost, and so excited and breathless that he could not enunciate clearly for some moments. At last he exclaimed—

"Come, Mr. Donovan—come quickly! My God, it's awful!"

"What is awful?" I asked.

"Don't question me; but come—come, for God's sake!" he answered, wringing his hands in distress.

Without another word I rose and followed him, and he led the way towards Mr. Balders's house. But he took a path that avoided the house, that brought us to a gate, over which we climbed, for the gate was locked, and I found we were in the glen, which I have already described.

It was now nearly dark. The wind was sighing through the trees, and the stream in the glen was murmuring hoarsely. Since leaving the hotel I had not spoken to David, who seemed to be strangely agitated. As we pursued our way along the little path, he fell behind, and lagged, as if actuated by some deadly fear. And turning to the man, I said—

“What is it, David? What’s the matter, man?”

By this time we had got abreast of the old ruined mill, which looked as weird and ghostly in the waning light as it was possible for anything to do; while a large white owl, that flitted noiselessly across our path, and disappeared in the ivy of the ruin, added to the uncanniness of the place.

“There—there!” answered David, in a hoarse croaking whisper, pointing towards the mill; “there—she’s in there!”

“Dead?” I ejaculated.

“Yes,” he stammered. “I went in this afternoon to stow some old boxes away, and when I opened the door a stench came into my face strong enough to knock me down. And when I got into the lower room I saw her lying all in a heap on the floor.”

As it was far too dark by this time to see anything, I told him to go to the house and get a lantern. And as I waited in that lonely glen by the ruined mill which contained the body of the dead woman, I could not refrain from moralizing on the weakness of poor humanity. Of course I concluded that it was a case of suicide. The poor young wife, I thought, had found that her union to an old man had made existence intolerable, and she had madly rushed from the known to the unknown. It was terrible, but it was a very human story.

A quarter of an hour passed before David returned with the lantern. He handed it to me together with the key of the mill door, saying he dare not go in again to look on the dreadful sight. So I opened the door and entered alone, and, holding the lantern up, I beheld what David had seen. It was, indeed, a dreadful sight. The poor woman was lying on her right side with her face turned to the floor. Her right arm was bent under her, but the left arm was stretched out above her head, thus hiding the face; and I noted that the hand was clenched, the nails being dug into the flesh as if she had died in great agony. Her head had been enveloped in a white woollen muffler—what ladies call a “cloud”; but it was dragged off, and the beautiful hair was loose and all dishevelled. Round about the body was a large patch of dried blood, and this led me to infer that she had shot herself. I did not, however, disturb the body, but at once despatched David for Mr. Balders’s doctor, enjoining him not to mention the discovery to any other living soul, for I was afraid that if it was suddenly and injudiciously told to Mr. Balders the shock might have a fatal effect in his weakened condition. Of course, my object in sending for the doctor was that he might examine the body and determine how the unhappy young woman had put an end to her life.

Three quarters of an hour slipped away before the doctor and David returned. Then we entered the mill together, David this time allowing his curiosity to overcome his horror.

“This is a terribly sad business,” the doctor observed as he took up the lantern, and, partly turning the body, revealed the face of the deceased, letting the light shine full upon it. It was a sight well calculated to

test the nerves, for the face, with its delicately chiselled features, was much decomposed, and it was drawn and puckered, showing that the poor creature must have died an agonizing death. Then asking me to hold the lantern, he proceeded with professional adroitness to examine the body to find out how the life had been destroyed. But there was no wound about the head, and none about the breast. The doctor seemed puzzled, and he muttered, "Umph! That is strange."

"Perhaps she's poisoned herself," suggested David timidly.

"Where has all this blood come from, then?" asked the doctor, pointing to the saturated floor. As he spoke he turned the body on to its face, and commenced an examination of the back. In a few moments he half started back, after the manner of a person who suddenly receives a shock from some sudden and utterly unexpected revelation, and he exclaimed—

"My God! Mr. Donovan, this is not a case of suicide, but murder!"

As the doctor made this startling announcement I thought David would have fallen to the floor, so frightened did he seem; and, speaking for myself, it certainly was a shock to me, for the idea of murder had never entered my head. But at the utterance of the dread word I felt that if it was murder, then indeed we stood in the presence of a strange mystery, and I could not refrain from echoing the word—"murder!"

"Yes," said the doctor, "beyond all doubt"; and he put his hand to a spot under the left shoulder-blade, and I noticed there a blue, livid mark. "There is the wound that has killed her," he added.

"What is it? A bullet-wound?" I asked.

"No. It is a knife-wound—she has been stabbed."

Having made a more minute examination, he was enabled to confirm his statement that it was a case of murder. For it was all but absolutely impossible that the poor woman could have stabbed herself in such a place.

As we could do nothing more then we covered the body with some old sacks that were lying about, and left the picturesque mill that was now made ghastly with a mysterious and terrible crime. I retained possession of the keys, and undertook to notify the coroner without loss of time ; and the doctor said he would charge himself with the painful duty of acquainting Mr. Balders of his wife's sad end as soon as he could do so with safety.

My first step was to call upon the Justice of the Peace for Gilsland, and, having discussed the matter with him, I drove to the residence of the County Coroner ; and, late as the hour was, he took immediate steps for holding an inquest the following day. The length of time that had evidently elapsed since the woman's death rendered it imperative that there should not be an hour's unnecessary delay in complying with all the forms of the law.

Looking at the matter from my point of view, I could not help having doubts as to whether the murderer would ever be brought to justice, for he had got too long a start, and would probably have made good his escape. But I did not abandon hope by any means, because, knowing as I did how stupid criminals usually are in leaving some trace behind them, I deemed it possible that I might get hold of a clue which I could follow up.

The next day the news had leaked out, and the excitement all through the parish was intense,

Hundreds of people flocked towards the glen, actuated by a strange and morbid curiosity, and it was necessary to place constables on duty to keep them out. The doctor had early received an order from the coroner to hold a *post-mortem* examination, and by noon he and a colleague were at work in the lonely mill, and I was present in my official capacity. That examination made it perfectly evident beyond all doubt that the unhappy lady had been foully murdered. Her fair and beautifully shaped throat bore cruel marks of strangulation. Even to the unprofessional eye, it was clear that powerful hands had encircled the throat and tried to throttle her to death. Perhaps she had been seized by the throat because she cried out and the murderer wished to still her cries; though in that lonely place she might have shrieked herself hoarse without attracting any attention. Then he had driven a knife into her back, or rather, as the examination revealed, a long, thin stiletto, that had broken off, and six and a half inches of the blade were left in the wound. The stab had penetrated the lung and wounded the pericardium. There was evidence, so the doctor said, that she had lingered in intense agony for some time, and that death had ensued from exhaustion through loss of blood. After receiving the wound she might have lived from one to six hours; for though the throat was very much bruised, and some of the vessels were injured, she had not died from strangulation. No property was found upon her person save her wedding-ring and keeper, a small gold pencil-case, and a duplicate key of the mill door. I subsequently learned that there were five or six keys in the house.

The evidence of the two medical men made it so autoptically plain that poor Mrs. Balders had been

murdered, that the coroner's jury returned a verdict of wilful murder against some person or persons unknown. There was very little other evidence to offer. It was proved that the lady had retired to her room, but had not gone to bed. Some time between her retiring and five o'clock in the morning when her husband looked into her room, she had secretly left the house in her ordinary house-dress, over which she had thrown a loose cloak, and she had muffled her head in a cloud; that she had no intention of remaining away long seemed proved by the fact that she had on her bedroom slippers.

No one who has read thus far will deny that the whole case seemed shrouded in impenetrable mystery, and that I was confronted with a criminal problem that would not be easily solved, even supposing it was possible to solve it at all, and I admit that I had my doubts. But the theory I constructed was this, the lady had given an assignation to somebody, and that that somebody had murdered her. Now, who was likely to have had sufficient influence over her to lure her to that old ghostly mill in the dead of night if it was not a lover? But then there at once arose the question—What motive had a lover for murdering her? To find out the *motive* in such a case was very important. To determine a satisfactory motive, however, in this instance was not easy. The idea of robbery was not tenable. That the murder had been premeditated seemed undoubted by the broken blade found in the body. Now, there was one thing in connection with this blade that led me to hope might ultimately lead to the arrest of the murderer, if he was in existence. A careful examination revealed that it was a piece of exquisite steel of foreign workmanship, and experts

pronounced it to be part of a Spanish stiletto. Where was the other part? My attention was directed in the first instance to discovering it. I searched the lower room of the mill, microscopically as I might term it, but could not find the missing haft. Then, aided by some of the rural constabulary and a detective from Newcastle, I searched the stream and the glen, but with a like result. The door of the mill was reached by half-a-dozen stone steps, that were green with damp and moss. By a careful examination of the floor of the room—which was in the basement, and had been what is called “the filling room,” that is, the room where the sacks were filled with the flour—I discovered clear traces of bloody footprints, which could be followed right down to the last step, thus showing that the murderer after stabbing his victim must have trampled in her warm blood. On the door itself there were marks of fingers that had been wet with blood. In passing out, he had pulled the door to while his hands were reeking with the life-fluid he had so wickedly spilt. I must mention here that David Logan stated that when he went to take the boxes to the mill, he was surprised to find that the door though closed was not locked. This made it pretty plain that the poor lady had taken the key with her from the house, and, after opening the mill door, had put the key into her pocket, where it was found. And when the murderer had completed his ghastly work, he either did not trouble himself about the key, or forgot it, which was most likely.

My failure to discover the haft of the stiletto suggested to me the possibility that the murderer might have carried it off owing to its bearing some name or mark that would have tended to betray him if it was

found, and that he would take effectual means to utterly destroy it.

Of course, by this time Mr. Balders had been informed of the murder of his wife, and the news had prostrated him. But in trying to get a clue I felt it was necessary I should question him as to whether he had reason to suspect that his late wife had had a secret lover; and I also required his permission to search her papers, for from David Logan's information she had carried on a clandestine correspondence. As every day's delay was a distinct gain to the murderer, I sought the doctor's permission to have an interview with his patient, and this was granted.

I found Mr. Balders very dejected and in great distress of mind. He seemed exceedingly reluctant to say one word that was likely to reflect on his wife's honour. He had evidently been passionately attached to her; but, as I pointed out to him, she was beyond the reach of either praise or blame, and that from every point of view it was highly desirable that strenuous efforts should be made to bring her cruel slayer to justice, for her blood cried aloud for vengeance.

My argument told, and he said that he had had reason to suspect his wife of an intrigue, for one day he wanted to get an address he knew she had in her desk, and, as she was out at the time, he went to the desk for it. In his search he came across a half-finished letter in her handwriting. It commenced, "My own darling Alfred," and was couched in the most amatory terms. When she returned he questioned her about it, and there was an unpleasant scene between them, but she stoutly denied that there was anything wrong, though she would not say who "My own darling Alfred" was. It will be remembered that David

Logan had told me he had one day carried a letter to the Post Office from Mrs. Balders, and it was addressed to Alfred something, of some ship then at Liverpool. The deduction from these two incidents was that Alfred was the Christian name of the lover.

Although Mr. Balders would not give his consent to my going through his late wife's papers, he undertook to do so himself, and the result was, he told me a little later, that he had found the following letter in her desk. Ethel, it should be stated, was his wife's name.

“MY DEAREST ETHEL.

“I will go north to see you for the last time, unless you will consent to do what I have so frequently urged you to do. It is useless your trifling with my feelings any longer. You know it makes me absolutely mad with jealousy when I think of you belonging to another. I feel sometimes as though I could kill you and myself too. Why did I ever meet you? It was fate I suppose, and the same fate may yet be my ruin. I will go to Carlisle as usual, and as soon as I arrive I will communicate with you, and we can arrange a meeting, but for both our sakes we must be careful. A stranger is so noticeable in such a small place.

“Yours till death,

“ALFRED.”

It will at once be seen what an important bearing this letter had on the case, although it contained no address, and no name beyond “Alfred”; but it was patent now that this mysterious Alfred was the lover. The handwriting was straggling and scraggy, and there was no punctuation. The writer of that letter was—I felt perfectly sure—the murderer of poor Mrs. Balders, and it was easy to construct a very feasible

theory of the tragedy. In order to avoid attracting attention, the meeting had been arranged to take place in the dead of night, and the place that offered the greatest security against any possible surprise was the old mill. Perhaps he, or perhaps she, had suggested it. However, that was a mere detail. But when they did meet he urged her to fly with him. She refused; the loneliness of the situation, the fact that she was in his power, and the likelihood that her body might lie there for some time before being discovered, suggested murder to him—even if he had not premeditated it; but that the crime had been premeditated seemed likely enough from the fact of his being armed with the stiletto. That pointed to the conclusion that he had gone to her with the alternative of flight or death.

Such was my theory of the crime, and the more I worked the problem out in my own mind, the more strongly the theory forced itself upon me.

My first step after reading the letter was to direct inquiries in Carlisle, to find out if possible where "Alfred" stayed, in order that I might get a description of him. As a mere bird of passage he would be likely to stay in a lodging-house or an hotel, and every place of this kind was visited, until at last my search was rewarded.

Three weeks before, a man had put up for two days in a little obscure inn near the centre of the town. The second evening he went out and never returned. He was described as a young, powerfully-built man, very dark complexioned; and from his dress, gait, and style of conversation, unmistakably a sailor. The only luggage he had with him when he arrived at the inn was a handbag, and this he had left behind him. Need I say that I at once took possession of this, although

the landlord only parted with it under compulsion, as his late lodger had left without paying his bill.

The bag contained a suit of rather good clothes, a brush and comb, a case of razors, two large plugs of navy tobacco such as is used by sailors, and some other odds and ends, including a pair of shoes, a shirt or two, and a collection of pipes. These things in themselves would not have aided me very much had it not been for the shirts. They were marked "Alfred Kent," and I felt that at last I had learnt the surname of the man I was seeking.

Alfred Kent was the murderer of Mrs. Balders, and Alfred Kent was a seaman. Not a sailor before the mast, for the lady was hardly likely to have taken up with a common sailor. Besides, his style of letter as well as his clothes indicated that he occupied some superior position. Perhaps he was a captain or a mate.

Kent was not a very common name; but still, it was common enough to make the search for Alfred Kent sufficiently difficult in the absence of any information as to where he hailed from. But I had got a very valuable clue, and I knew how to use it. Firstly, I caused the description of him, as furnished to me by the landlord of the inn, to be sent through the channels at the command of the police to every police-station in the United Kingdom, and I knew that that would cause thousands of eyes to keep a look-out for him. Then every firm of ship-owners, big and little, and every shipping-office was notified and asked if they had the name of Alfred Kent on their books. But the replies were always negatives, and I began to fear that this extraordinary tragedy would have to be relegated to the category of undiscovered crimes.

For the world was large, Alfred Kent had got a good

start, and his identity would be lost in the great ocean of humanity. The body of poor frail Mrs. Balders had been consigned to its last resting-place in the sweetest of little burying-grounds, where only the peaceful Sabbath bells and the wind sighing through the trees broke the silence. Mr. Balders had recovered from his prostration; but it was painfully evident that he was very deeply affected. He looked much older, his form was bowed and his face stamped with an unchanging expression of infinite sorrow. So distasteful had his beautiful house become to him that he could not endure to stay there, and he removed with his relatives and servants to the neighbourhood of Edinburgh.

It followed almost as a matter of course that in such a rural neighbourhood as Gilsland the tragedy would arouse the superstitions of the ignorant and credulous, and the old mill was shunned as a plague spot, for people averred that it was haunted. And even the house itself shared in the evil repute, so it was given over to dust and silence, for a tenant could not be found for it.

My disappointment at my failure to trace the assassin was very keen, but I could no more perform impossibilities than any other man. On the night of the murder Alfred Kent had not returned to his lodgings, because obviously he had some fear of detection, and he preferred to lose the few things he had left at the inn rather than run any risk. In effecting his escape, it was extremely probable that he walked back to Carlisle, as from there he would be able to get an early train going south; for it was equally probable that he went south. At any rate, whether he went north or south, east or west, he had disappeared after that fatal night and left not a trace behind. But let it not be supposed that I was inclined to abandon the case. It was not in my

nature to be daunted because success did not at first reward my efforts. Such matters as these had for me an abiding interest. I have always looked upon murder as amongst the most painfully interesting of human problems—at any rate, such murders as that of the ill-starred Mrs. Balders in the old mill in the lonely glen at Gilsland. Viewed in the light of the letter found in the deceased woman's desk, it was pretty clear that jealousy and disappointment had prompted the crime, and the murderer had gone prepared to execute his fell purpose if the woman he had betrayed failed in compliance with his demands to abandon her home, her friends, and her lawful husband. Wherever he had started from, when he set out on his journey for Carlisle, he did so with thoughts of murder in his heart. If that was not so, why did he carry with him that formidable stiletto? It was not easy to find an answer to that question, except on some such hypothesis as that I suggest. His illicit passion had begotten in him a fierce and fiery jealousy, and that jealousy had made him a murderer.

Nearly two years passed, during which time I had many and arduous duties to perform in my professional capacity which required close and almost ceaseless attention. But I never forgot that Alfred Kent was still at large, and, as the saying is, I kept my eyes open. In fact, I had never entirely ceased to believe that some day I should get on the track of the slayer and hunt him down. The broken stiletto-blade was still in my possession, and I always thought that sooner or later it would be the means of betraying Alfred Kent into the hands of justice.

My faith was rewarded at last.

It chanced one night, during a dense, impenetrable

fog, which for many days had enwrapped the southern and eastern parts of England, and spread far out to sea, that a large outward-bound sailing ship, on her way out to New Zealand, had been obliged to anchor off Dungeness, for though she had come down Channel in charge of two tugs, the fog got so dense as night fell that it was not considered safe to continue running, and so the vessel was brought up off the Dungeness light. She had a full crew and about 300 passengers on board, and as those whose duty did not demand their presence on deck retired to rest, they probably felt secure as the gleam of the friendly lighthouse reached them even through the fog. But fate works in a mysterious way, and often when we think ourselves most safe we are in the greatest peril.

As the ship lay there in the silent watches of the night, with the thick fog wrapped about her like a shroud, and the angry waves leaping and battering at her sides as if they were trying to find an entrance through the stout timbers that had defied many a gale, and were capable of defying many another, a large steamer was feeling her way up Channel. She had come from Brazil, and had a valuable cargo on board and many passengers, all of whom were anxious to reach their destinations. That steamer was not called Doom, but it would nevertheless have been an appropriate name; for as her great bulk moved on, propelled by her powerful engines working at half-speed, she, without any forewarning, suddenly crashed into the anchored sailing ship, which, cut down to the water's edge, immediately began to sink.

I do not intend to harrow the reader's feelings with the ghastly details of that awful collision, for they do not come within the scope of this narrative. Those who

wish to read them have only to turn to the records of the period. Suffice it to say that while the steamer was but little damaged, the sailing ship was wounded to her destruction, and soon the dark and hungry waters were hissing and surging over the heads of a struggling mass of human beings, the greater proportion of whom had been suddenly aroused from their peaceful earthly sleep to sink into the sleep eternal.

As soon as it was possible to do so, the steamer that ought to have been called Doom lowered her boats and commenced the work of rescue. About fifty or sixty persons altogether were saved from a watery grave, including passengers and crew. This terrible calamity spread consternation throughout the country, and a list of the saved was sought after with intense and painful eagerness. When that list was given, there appeared in it the name of "Alfred Kent, chief mate." I saw that list and that name, and as I read it I exclaimed, "At last!" The particulars given went on to say that the mate was keeping the mid-anchor watch, consequently was on deck, and as soon as the ship was struck he exerted almost superhuman efforts to save life, and was instrumental in rescuing several persons from death, and not until he was exhausted and prostrated was he taken on board the steamer. Then said I to myself, "Is it possible that this man, who has acted so nobly, and perilled his life to save others, can be a murderer? Surely it is a coincidence! It is some other Alfred Kent, and not the cowardly and cruel ruffian who did a weak and confiding woman to death in the ruined mill in the glen at Gilsland." But my duty was plain, and that was to prove whether the rescued Alfred Kent, chief mate, was or was not a murderer. He, with the other survivors of the crew,

had been taken to the Sailors' Home in London, and thither I proceeded without loss of time, and I was informed that Kent had been removed to the hospital suffering from a raging fever, the result of the excitement, prostration, and exposure on that awful night of the wreck.

The result of my inquiries at the hospital was that I was told he was in a dangerous state of health, and nobody could be allowed to see him—not even his wife, who had been to the hospital two or three times half distracted, and begged and prayed to be allowed to see him. His case had aroused great sympathy throughout the country, and subscriptions were flowing in as a testimony of admiration of his pluck and unselfishness in those moments of fearful peril. Of course, until I had some tangible evidence to go upon that this was the Alfred Kent I was seeking, I could not breathe a word to his prejudice. The circumstances were painful and pathetic enough, I must confess, and though I could not shirk my duty, I sincerely wished it had not fallen upon me. My next step was to visit his wife, whose address I had no difficulty in obtaining. She was living in a modest little house on the south side of London, and I found she was a young and very pretty woman, nursing her first baby, which was about three months old. Without making known the object of my inquiries, I ascertained from her that she had been married to Kent thirteen months, and that she had only known him for four months before she married him. When she first met him he had just come home from a voyage to the West Indies.

“Have you got a likeness of him?” I asked.

“Oh yes!” she exclaimed, and she at once brought a photograph from another room. But it was the

likeness of a bearded man, whereas the description I had only spoke of a moustache. That, however, was of little consequence, for a beard is soon grown; but still, it so altered the appearance of the man when compared with the verbal description, that I could not identify him. But presently I happened to turn my eyes towards the polished walnut-wood cabinet that, with glass panels, stood in a recess in the room. The cabinet was full of knick-knacks, foreign curiosities, pieces of china, and such like. But one thing, and one thing only, had any interest for me, and that thing was what I took to be the silver handle of a stiletto. I rose with eagerness, went to the cabinet, and examined the handle. It was silver undoubtedly, and beautifully chased, and part of a broken blade was still attached to it. I could scarcely refrain from exclaiming "Eureka!" I turned quietly, however, to Mrs. Kent, and asked her if she would allow me to examine that haft. With not the slightest suspicion of my motive, she opened the door of the cabinet, and gave me the stiletto handle. There, on the smooth part of it, I read this inscription in Spanish—

"TO ALFRED KENT,
Second Mate of the Ship 'Fiery Cross,'
From his sincere Friend,
GONSALVES DI SILVA, Cadiz."

"Do you know how long your husband has had this?" I asked.

"No. I found it amongst some old rubbish in a box of his. It was very stained and dirty, and I cleaned it up; and, as it's real silver, I put it in there, intending to ask him about it."

If I felt my duty to be painful before, it was doubly

so now, for the revelation I should be compelled to make would cloud and blight this poor young wife's future.

"I must ask you to allow me to take this away," I said, "for I have every reason to think I have the missing blade of it."

She seemed unwilling to accede to my request, and I had to tell her that I was a detective, and needed it in the interests of justice. She grew pale and faint as she asked if her husband had done anything wrong. I gave a prevaricating answer, and was glad enough to get away. I found that the blade in my possession fitted the broken part still in the handle exactly, and experts pronounced the two pieces of steel to be identical in make.

There could no longer be any doubt then that I had tracked down Mrs. Balders's murderer at last, but it was ordained that he should escape man's justice, for the brain fever that had supervened ended fatally ten days after the collision. I honestly confess that I was glad, for his poor young wife's sake, that such was the case.

His object in retaining the handle of the dagger was explained by the fact that it had his name on, and was valuable, being solid silver. And knowing that the blade would be found, and inquiries made for the haft, he had been afraid to do anything with it, and possibly thought it was safer amongst the old rubbish in his box than anywhere else. I did not seek to ascertain anything of his career antecedent to the murder; and how and when he and his victim became acquainted, and why he murdered her, must ever remain a mystery.

HUNTING FOR WATER-RATS.

It may be safely asserted that, out of the four millions or so of people who inhabit the great world of London, but a relatively small number of them know anything of the mysteries of the silent highway that runs through their city. If the story of the Thames could be written, what a wonderful tale it would make, a tale that would deal with every human passion, and through it all would run a burden of sorrow and death. No other river in the world has such a tale associated with it. It has borne royal barges, and witnessed the pomp and pageantry of Kings and Queens going and coming in state. It has heard the sighs and groans of broken-hearted captives who were being hurried to their doom in the grim Tower. On its tawny waters have floated the richest galleons and the proudest navies of the world. Many a ghastly tragedy has it known; and into its dark depths how often has it received unhappy souls whom the burden, the bitterness, and the cruelty of life have driven mad. To them, surely, it has been a kindly river, for it has given them peace and rest from the world's strife. And how much of crime it has known, alas! it would be hard to say—crimes strange, dark, and mysterious. In the murk of night there have been done deeds on the Thames of which the bare relation would make the blood curdle. It is not so many years since the "Waterloo Bridge Mystery" set all Great

Britain pondering. Many will remember how London was one morning startled by the report that two young men named Kilsby had found in the early dawn, resting on one of the abutments of the bridge, near the water, a carpet bag that had evidently been thrown from the bridge, but instead of falling into the water it had fallen on the abutment. That bag contained pieces of a human body that had been salted and boiled. Some clothes of foreign make were in the bag with the poor remains of mortality. Almost superhuman efforts were used to discover the mystery of the bag, but it is a mystery still. It was suggested that the remains had come from the dissecting-room of an hospital, and that some medical students had placed it where it was found in order to create a sensation, but that suggestion was not worth a moment's credence. There was not the shadow of doubt that the body had been cut up by some one utterly unacquainted with the anatomy of the human frame. There were other indications, too, that it was a case of murder, but the murderer escaped the earthly penalty of his crime.

A still stranger tragedy than this Waterloo Bridge mystery was perpetrated in the early part of the forties. Some bargees had anchored their barge for the night off Greenhithe. On raising their anchor in the morning they brought with it a sack that was very heavy, and which made them open their eyes with pleased excitement, for they thought they had fished up a treasure. When they examined the sack, however, they shrank away in horror, for it contained the terribly decomposed body of a woman. Strangely enough, the head and face were only slightly decayed, and the features were those of a singularly handsome young woman of about nineteen or twenty. She had perfect teeth, and a remarkable

quantity of light-brown hair. The body was well dressed, and all the clothing was of a most expensive kind. She had small feet, and small delicate hands that had never done a day's hard work. Round her slender neck was a thin silken cord, with which she had been strangled, and in the sack was a fifty-six pound weight that had been placed there to sink the body. But murder will out, and the anchor of the barge had brought this one to light. "Who was she? What was she?" The answers have never been forthcoming. It was another of the many Thames mysteries. Hundreds of people viewed the body, but none recognized it, and so it was buried as "an unknown" in a nameless grave, and the great river keeps its secret.

When one remembers how the edges of the two halves of the mighty city overlap the river, as it were, it will be seen how readily it lends itself to the ways of evil-doers. On both sides below London Bridge the water washes the basements of many old houses, and there are narrow slums that run right down to the water, from evil rookeries. There are foul spots that, though in the heart of the greatest city of the world, are as lonely and deserted after dark as the great Sahara; that is, deserted save for the evil things—biped and quadruped—that haunt them. And at intervals for miles are warehouses, wharves, building yards, works, and offices abutting on the river, and containing millions of pounds' worth of property. To guard all these places is no easy task, for the silent highway favours the operations of those who prey upon their fellows, and who are known to the police as "water-rats." Matters, however, are now vastly improved to what they were in my day. Lonely spots

on the river banks have been lighted with gas-lamps, where before none existed ; and the highway is nightly patrolled by an excellently organized staff of water police. But though the crime of the river is lessened to what is perhaps the minimum, it is not stamped out. The watchers are watched, and the police are often outwitted ; for in the dark holes and corners of the wharves and piers the water-rats lurk, and a keen lookout is kept for the police boats.

A quarter of a century or so ago the water-rats had become exceedingly troublesome. Robberies from the wharves and warehouses were almost of nightly occurrence, and one night an atrocious crime was perpetrated which caused such an outburst of indignation that it was resolved to take steps to try and bring the criminals to justice. It was at the beginning of winter, and a small steamer was moored off Rotherhithe, which is on the right bank of the river nearly opposite the Tower. The steamer was undergoing some internal repairs, and at night she was left in charge of an old watchman who was widely known as Thames Tommy. He had, strangely enough, been born on the river in a barge, and he had passed the whole of his life within sound of its wash. He was very poor, and so, although he was old and feeble, being nearly eighty years of age, he was glad to undertake the duties of night watchman ; and it was in the fulfilment of his duties as watchman on board the steamer in question that he met with his death. He had been left in sole charge of the vessel one night, and in the morning when the workmen went on board to begin their daily labour they found poor old Thames Tommy lying dead on the deck, his grey hairs all dabbled with blood and his skull crushed in. The captain's cabin had been entered by

means of skeleton keys, and a valuable chronometer, a sextant, a quantity of clothing, and a gold watch and chain carried off. But, in addition, the wine-locker had been broken open, and a number of cases of wines and spirits stolen. Robbery, therefore, had been the motive, and in attempting to defend the property committed to his charge poor old Tommy had been knocked on the head.

The old man bore a high reputation on the river, and his honesty and integrity were beyond reproach, and when the news of the crime circulated there was a strong expression of indignation. Of course the police came in for the usual amount of opprobrium, as though it was possible for the guardians of the peace to be everywhere, and especially everywhere on the river. The blame really rested on those who left the vessel in the sole charge of a feeble old man; but, as it turned out afterwards, the captain had that day gone a little way out of London to be present at the marriage of his niece, and his mate, who was supposed to sleep on board, was on the spree somewhere. Hence it was that Tommy was alone, and it seemed to argue that the thieves were aware of that fact.

Now, there were many reasons for regarding it as an absolute certainty that the crime had been perpetrated by some of the river rats; for these human vermin prowl about the water ever on the alert for prey; and life is no more sacred to them than property is. They are as ready to spill blood as they are to carry off anything that they can turn into money.

The murder of Thames Tommy stirred up the authorities of the "Yard," and it was determined to use every means to bring the crime home, and make an example of the culprits. At that time I had been

absent from duty for a while owing to an accident ; but as it was known that I had a good deal of experience in dealing with the riverside population, and was acquainted with many of the desperate characters who had their haunts in the slums and alleys that abutted on the river, I was sent for and requested to take the case up. Although I was far from well, I could not resist the mandate, and so I lost no time in getting to work.

To my mind it was evident that the property that had been stolen was of such a kind that the thieves could never hope to dispose of it themselves in the ordinary way ; for if they attempted to deal with a quantity of wines and spirits, a chronometer worth fifty guineas, and a valuable sextant, they would be certain to arouse suspicion. They would therefore have recourse to the "fence" ; and, as I have repeatedly stated in narrating my experiences, the "fence" is so artful and cunning, and his ways for getting rid of stolen property so many, that I did not feel very sanguine that we should recover any of the things ; but I did feel sanguine that I should be able to trap some of the rats. I knew well enough that these river thieves worked in gangs, and that amongst them there was a kind of Freemasonry, whereby they communicated and put each other on the alert against danger, for danger to one lot meant more or less danger to all. Nevertheless, having some knowledge of their ways and their haunts, I deemed it probable I should succeed in bringing the murder of Thames Tommy home, although the property might be lost.

For the information of those who are unacquainted with London, I may state that on both sides of the river below London Bridge there is a perfect network

of alleys, passages, and approaches to the water, and inhabiting these districts is a large population made up of people who earn their living in some way in connection with the river. They might be classified as boatmen, porters, coal-heavers, trimmers, stevedores, mechanics, carpenters, painters, and a big residuum of loafers and idlers, who live heaven knows how. It is this residuum that forms the dangerous element, and amongst it may be found some of the worst characters in the whole of the metropolis. Now, I was perfectly sure that it was amongst this class that I should find the rascals I wanted, or, at any rate, that I should hear something about them. But, in the absence of the slightest clue, and having regard to the extensive area, as well as the number of people dwelling in it, it seemed something in the nature of a wild-goose chase; but I was in no way disheartened—indeed, I faced the task with zeal, for I was particularly anxious to have the credit of exterminating the water-rats. When I say exterminating, I mean, of course, in a relative sense, for evil-doers will exist as long as the world lasts, unless human nature undergoes an entire change for the better, which is not in the least degree likely.

I began my search by putting off from St. Paul's Pier one night about twelve o'clock in a small rowing boat, accompanied by five comrades. My object was to endeavour to arrest some of the river prowlers who might be unable to give an account of themselves, as through them I might possibly obtain a clue. This was my hope. At all hours of the night, on this silent highway, there is traffic going on. In some parts work never ceases, for there are vessels to load and unload with the utmost despatch; and when the day gangs leave off their work, night gangs take their place.

Barges move up and down with the tide, and boat-loads of workmen may be occasionally met with. But of course this traffic and movement are after all partial, and there are long stretches where all is still as death, save for the mournful lapping of the water against the sides of the piers, or the sides of ships and barges. Occasionally boats are met with whose occupants are bent on no legitimate business; and these people are what I term the water-rats. Knowing that the hand of the law is against them, they are as cunning as their quadruped prototypes, and unless you catch them *flagrante delicto*, it is an exceedingly difficult matter to get evidence that will serve to convict them. I have already stated that matters on the river are now very much improved compared to what they were at the time I am referring to. The river police form a distinct branch of the service in themselves, and their system of patrolling is so good that the rats have a hard time of it, and are chevied from pillar to post. But still, even now they do sometimes make a fairly good haul, though in my time the thieves of the river certainly waxed fatter than they do at present.

It was a bitter night, and exceedingly dark, as we pulled down towards Wapping. We had muffled the rowlocks of the boat, so that the oars made no noise, and silently and like a shadow we went down slowly with the tide. I steered, four of my companions pulled, and the sixth man, who was squatted down in the bows, kept a sharp look-out. The night was so dark, however, that it was not easy to see far ahead. But the man in the bow had originally been a sailor, and his eyes were accustomed to peering into the darkness. We did not steer a straight course, but pulled from side to side, keeping a sharp look-out for suspicious craft, but we

saw nothing to attract our attention. On getting down towards Limehouse, however, we came up with a boat near the entrance to the West India Docks. We were provided with a bull's-eye lantern, and, turning the light on, we found that the boat contained three men.

"What are you doing here?" I asked.

"What has that to do with you, governor?" came the reply in a voice that was at once the most peculiarly raucous I ever heard from a human being. It was a voice that had a tendency to make one's blood curdle, as the saying is, like the sharpening of a saw. And since the quality of the voice indicates in a large measure the character of the owner, I associated that harsh, guttural, crow-like voice with evil of every kind.

"Well," I answered, "it has a good deal to do with me, as you will find."

"Who are *you*?" came the surly demand.

"I am a police officer, and, in the name of the law, I demand to know your business?" I said.

My look-out man had got a good hold of the strange boat, and I stood up, and, turning the bull's-eye full on the faces of the three men, scrutinized them keenly. Two of them were very ordinary faces, by no means pleasing, and yet not altogether repulsive. But the third man, he of the ropy voice, had a round pudding face, set on to a bull-like neck. He was cleanly shaved; his eyes were small and bright, and particularly like a rat's; while the mouth was huge, and the under jaw massive and square, signifying a brutal, cruel, and fierce nature. Altogether, the face was a low, sensual one, without a redeeming trait.

"All right, governor," said the fellow, "you shall know our business. We are collecting drift-wood so as

to make a 'onest penny. What we collects at night we sells in the day."

As he spoke he pointed to a heap of pieces of wood lying at the bottom of the boat, and which had been fished out of the river.

I was, however, so prejudiced against the man on account of his evil looks that I was determined to know more about him. I have always claimed to be a fairly good judge of character from the face; and long experience has taught me that, though not an infallible guide, it may, taken in connection with the voice and other things, afford one a pretty good index to the mind of the person.

"What is your name?" I asked.

"Stumps," came the laconic reply, followed by a hoarse laugh.

"I don't want any nonsense," I said. "What's your name?"

"Stumps!" he roared again; and at the same time he beat a tattoo on the bottom of the boat with two wooden legs. "Stumps is what every one calls me; but my proper name is Bill Watkins."

"And your address, Mr. Watkins-Stumps, or Stumps-Watkins, where is that?"

"Oh, it ain't far from this. I lives in Lime'us, and my pals here, one on 'em's a cousin o' mine, lives alongside o' me."

"That may be all very true, Mr. Watkins," said I, "but I am not going to take your bare word for it. Is that your boat?"

"Yes."

"Where do you moor her?"

"I keeps her up a creek."

"Very well, pull away to your moorings, and then

I'll accompany you to your home, so that I may learn whether you have given me the right address or not."

"All right, cockie?" he exclaimed quite cheerfully, and telling his mates to pull. They started up the river, until suddenly they shot into a creek, and we followed them. They ran their boat up on to the slimy mud, and then Stumps sprang out with wonderful agility, and he made fast the painter of his boat to an iron ring fixed in a post that was driven into the ooze. His companions were about to get out, but I told them they would remain there as hostages till I and one of my mates returned. They did not seem to like that, complaining that they were cold and hungry. However, we were well supplied with refreshments in the shape of bread and cheese, cold meat, and half a gallon of beer in a jar, and we told them that they could have some supper. This reconciled them, and then, led by Stumps, I and one of my companions set off. Our way was over baulks of slimy, rotting timber, old anchors, rusty chains, and a miscellaneous collection of reeking, filthy rubbish, including the decomposing carcasses of cats and dogs. But Stumps was perfectly familiar with every inch of the ground, and, in spite of his two wooden legs, he moved about as well as we did, in fact better, for we had to watch our feet and pick our way by means of the bull's-eye, but he forged ahead as if utterly indifferent to the obstacles that bestrewed our path. But his wooden shins were incapable of feeling, while our legs were bruised and peeled by frequent contact with the old anchors and the timber. At last, however, much to our relief, we came to a high wooden fence, in which was a door. Stumps opened the door with a key that he took from his pocket, and passing through the doorway we

found ourselves in what appeared to be a lane. It was ankle deep in mud. On the opposite side Stumps said there was a shipbuilding yard, and the river end of the lane was closed by the wharves of this yard. Proceeding along the slough of despond, which, so far as we could make out in the darkness, was dismalness and melancholy itself, we walked for about three hundred yards, until we came to four tumbledown cottages that abutted on a timber yard where there were huge stacks of timber.

"This yere's my shanty, governor," croaked Stumps, as he inserted a key in the door of one of the cottages, and invited us to enter. We flashed the light of the lantern into the passage; dirt, squalor, and filth were conspicuous, and the air was rank and foetid.

However, we went in, and Stumps conducted us to the front room, and, striking a match, lit a lamp. Then he roared out—

"Hi, mother, here's some gents as has come to see us."

There was a partition door between his room and the back room, which was a sleeping place, and in obedience to the summon an old hag emerged from the room, having just risen from her bed. I think that, without exception, she was the ugliest old creature I have ever seen. The skin of her face, neck, and arms was shrivelled up like dried parchment, and the cracks were choked with dirt. A few wisps of grey tow-like hair hung about her face and neck, and her eyes were blood-shot and fierce. She was clad in a nightdress or chemise that could never have seen the washtub for years. Over this she had slipped an old rag of a red petticoat, leaving her legs and feet bare.

"This is my missus," remarked Stumps, by way of introduction; and the old hag, as she turned her blood-

shot orbs upon us and glared, snarled like an angry cat, and said—

“Who’s these blooming blokes?”

“They’re coppers, mother—friendly coppers; we met ’em on the river,” answered Stumps.

“Ha!” she hissed, with suppressed fierceness and passion, “I hates all coppers! The whole bloomin’ lot o’ ’em ought to be smothered!”

“Well—well, mother, don’t get a-losing on your temper,” remarked her husband, “but get out a toothful for the gents. We ain’t a done nothink, you know, as we need fear the coppers.”

“Ha!” she hissed again, “I hate ’em! I ain’t a-going to get ’em no toothful”; and with that she disappeared into her den, and we heard her muttering to herself and growling like a hyena.

Stumps told us that he had a drop of good “old Jamaica,” and we were welcome to it; but, declining his hospitality, we gave him to understand that we were so far satisfied that he lived there, but we questioned him closely as to how he got his living, and he answered—

“I’m what they calls a river lark. I goes out at night a-picking up the pieces o’ wood, and then I makes ’em up in bundles an’ sells ’em. Sometimes I comes across old barrels and boxes; and now and again I gets a dead ’un, and I lands the body and tells the police, and I has the reward o’ five shillings, what’s paid by the parish. But, lor’, governor, I don’t make a fat living on it, I assures you; and if it wasn’t for the old ’ooman a-doing a bit o’ hawking when she can get anythink to sell, we’d have to go into the work’us.”

I was convinced that Stumps was a lying old rascal, and that in spite of his assumed affability he was a

dangerous character. However, we could do nothing more then, so we started back and he accompanied us.

When we reached our boat, we found that his companions had pulled his boat up on to the mud, and after some little palaver, during which they seemed anxious that we should sheer off, but which I was in no hurry to do, they themselves departed just as the feeble, sickly light of the coming day began to assert itself.

I don't know how it was, but soon after they had disappeared it suddenly occurred to me to examine their boat. The idea came upon me like an inspiration, and I at once began to turn over the heap of chips and pieces of wood, when, to my utter surprise, I found concealed under the rubbish a large ham and a gallon stone jar which on examination proved to be full to the bung with rum.

This discovery confirmed the opinion I had formed, that he of the raucous voice was a rascal. Indeed, I should have been wanting in the commonest of perception had I been deceived by his plausibility. Rascality was writ large on his coarse features; and as for his "missus," she was as evil a specimen of depraved humanity as I had seen for a long time. She could only be called a woman by courtesy, for, as a matter of fact, she was a hag of a most sinister and repulsive kind. I was now perfectly certain that by a lucky chance I had come upon a nest of most dangerous water-rats; and, though I might fail to bring the slayer of old Thames Tommy to justice, it seemed to me quite within the bounds of strong probability that I should be able to stop the pranks of one gang of harpies for a time at least. Of course, the thing was to get evidence, and I have already pointed out that that is the chief difficulty in dealing with this class of miscreants. Nor could I

overlook what was a very possible feature in the case. That is, in a certain sense Stumps and his companions might have become possessed of the ham and the jar of rum in a way that placed them outside the reach of the law. And here let me explain what I mean. It was well known to us—and I believe the same thing is still carried on at the present day, though to a lesser extent—that sailors, not excluding officers and captains of vessels, coming from foreign voyages were sometimes in the habit of selling such portions of the ship's surplus stores as they could secretly and conveniently get rid of. These things were sold while the ships were coming up the river to rascals who were on the look-out, and who made their living by this illegal trade. Of course the Custom house officers had to be hoodwinked, and that necessitated considerable risk, but nevertheless the trade was carried on, and it is perhaps needless to say that the buyers never gave more than a quarter the value of the goods.

Now, when I say that, on the assumption that Stumps had purchased the rum and ham in this way, he would be outside the reach of the law—what I mean is this, and it somewhat qualifies my first statement, that he could not be convicted of theft. The most that could happen would be a conviction for smuggling, and the result of that would be a fine and confiscation of the goods. The great difficulty in all these cases was to find out where the goods came from. The sellers of course would not betray themselves, and the buyers would prefer to submit to a fine rather than split, for if they did their trade would be ruined, and they would be marked men. Herein then lay the difficulty, and it was a difficulty that had confronted us for a long time, and caused no end of bother. If we could only have

laid hands on the sellers, the owners of the vessels would have prosecuted them to conviction. It even happened, and not unfrequently by any means, that ships were boarded at sea, before they got within the Custom house zone, by men who met them in boats, and went on board ostensibly to buy old clothes, birds, and foreign curios from the sailors. These boats, having made a haul, would dodge about until nightfall, when they were met by other boats, and the plunder was divided; the original buyers selling again to smaller buyers. Though the Custom house authorities were aware of this illegitimate traffic, and did all they could to stop it, they had to admit that they were hedged about with difficulties that were not easily overcome.

Mindful of all these facts, I knew that it would not be wise to act precipitately with regard to Stumps; and so I determined to try and lay a trap for the wilely old rat. I was convinced that he would not return for the ham and the rum so long as he thought that we were near. I therefore took two of my men, telling the others to go back with the boat, and then I and my companions concealed ourselves amongst the old anchors and timber lying about in the mud, and in such a position that we had Stumps's boat in view, and could watch the movements of any one who came to it.

It may be easily imagined that our position was an exceedingly unpleasant one. The morning was raw, chill, and wet. The cold wind swept up the river, laden with dripping mist, that seemed to cling about one like sodden wool, and not only dispirited, but lowered one's vitality. Then, again, that great expanse of reeking, slimy ooze was suggestive of ague and pestilence, while the effluvium that arose was nauseating. But duty demands faithfulness under the most trying

and adverse circumstances; and, recognizing this as an axiom, we submitted to all the discomfort and risks in the hope that we should be able to track crime to its lair, and bring it to the bar of justice.

Anything more dreary, more melancholy than that spot could not be conceived. The green and slimy timber that lay about, the rusty and broken anchors and old chains, so typical of dead things—of ships and sailors whose voyages had long ago ended, and who had decayed and mouldered to dust; the filthy water in the creek, that seemed to be the last resting-place of all the stray cats and dogs of the district; the grime and rottenness that the yellowlight of the murky day revealed,—all these things were the details of a scene over which a blight had passed. It was a sad and depressing picture of the polluting presence of man. Time was, no doubt, when the creek was a pellucid stream, when trees lined the banks, and sedges and sand-grass nodded to the whispering wind; and curlews and seamews and gulls and plovers had their home there until man came, then Nature took flight and withered, and the place became a Stygian wilderness. It was a fitting haunt for human rats, as it was for the four-legged ones, numbers of which we saw prowling about searching for garbage that the black water washed on to the reeking mud.

As the sombre and weeping day declared itself, there was the subitaneous clanging of a heavy bell—it was the bell of the shipyard summoning the toilers to their grimy labour, and then the peace of the night was shivered and shattered by the ringing of a thousand hammers on rivet and plate; while sinew and muscle and sweat helped to fashion some stately ship that would anon go forth to the ocean, where God's winds blow uncontaminated. In that terrible spot cunning

brains and hands were building up a monument of ingenuity and usefulness; but sloth and industry, honesty and crime walk together, and though those ringing hammers spoke of honourable labour, we knew that human beasts of prey had their haunt there, and we, who represented law and order, crouched and waited like hunters who wait for their game. The cold and damp told upon us, and hunger asserted itself; but personal convenience had to be sacrificed to duty, exacting though it was. At last our patience was rewarded, for about half-past seven the door in the fence was opened, and Stumps appeared. It was astonishing how, with the aid of a stick, he moved along on his wooden legs. They did not seem to inconvenience him in the slightest degree, except when he got to the soft mud, then his timber shanks sank down, and it was no easy matter pulling them out. This, however, was only in one part, for, with the agility of an acrobat, he strode along on the timber baulks. I noticed then that the boat had very artfully been hauled close to a huge piece of timber half embedded, but which afforded Stumps solid walking.

When he reached his boat he glanced round to see if he was alone in the slimy wilderness. Although his face was full of rascality, and his eyes unmistakably spoke of a singularly cunning nature, there was a certain humorous expression in his begrimed and weather-hardened features. He had brought a sack with him, and, feeling satisfied that no one was observing him, he popped the ham and the jar of rum into the sack, which he swung over his back, and, leaving the pile of drift-wood in the boat, he stumped off. When he got clear, and had fastened the gate after him, I and my mate rose, glad to stretch our limbs after our long

and cold watch; and having given Stumps a good start we followed in his track, getting into the roadway by climbing over a part of the fence where the top part was broken off. We saw our man a considerable distance ahead, ploughing his way through the mud and ruts, for it was not a regularly made road, the side path being merely a narrow track, cindered, and worn hard by the tramping of the workmen's feet as they passed to and fro to their labours and their homes. Keeping Stumps in sight, we followed until we saw him disappear in his cottage. Then we hurried forward, and reached the door within five minutes after he had entered. There were only the four cottages in the row, and they were tumbledown, ramshackle places. I knocked at the door of Stumps's house, and after I had waited for some few minutes, during which I heard quick hurried movements going on inside, and the door was opened by the "missus." She looked not one whit less repulsive than she had done some hours previous when, like a thing of evil, she had presented herself before us in obedience to the summons of her lord.

"Is your husband in?" I asked peremptorily, as I walked into the passage.

"O Lord, Bill!" she yelled out, "'ere's these bloomin' coppers a-come back."

I knew that she meant that as a warning to him, so I went forward towards the room; but, like a fierce wild cat she sprang at me, and, seizing me, dragged me back, and exclaimed, with an oath of a very blood-curdling description—

"What do you want a-coming into decent folks' houses that way?"

One of my men stepped forward and pulled her off.

"Well, missus," said I imperturbably, "I want some of that rum your husband has got."

Misunderstanding my remark, she sang out again—

"Bill, these yer cops wants a lush." Then, addressing me, "We don't keep no public-house here, but my old man allers has a toothful in case I be took bad in the night."

"Ah!" I remarked complacently, "and I have no doubt you are often took bad."

"No, I ain't," she snarled, and at that moment Stumps came out of the room with a leer on his face.

"Well, gents," he said, "what's the meaning o' this yer? Are you wanting a smell o' the Jamaica?"

"Yes," I answered, whereupon he said—

"All right, old pal, I can accommodate you."

He entered the room again, and we followed. Then he opened the door of a cupboard, and took out a square white glass bottle about half full of rum, and, producing three or four wine-glasses, he invited us to drink.

"That's not the rum I want, Stumps," I said; "I want the jar you brought up from the boat just now."

For a moment a look of dismay flashed across his face, and he exchanged glances with the old woman, who gave vent to a perfect torrent of abuse, which she poured on my devoted head. Her husband tried to stop her, but she was not to be stopped until she had emptied herself of breath and words. Then Stumps's face beamed with a grin as he said—

"So you was watching, was you? Well, gents, you've found a mare's nest this time, anyhow." With that he lifted up the table-cloth that entirely covered a small square table standing against the wall, and from

under the table he produced the jar of rum and the ham. "There," he said, "them's what you're a-wanting, ain't they?"

"Yes, where did you get them from?"

"Where did I get 'em from? I got 'em honestly, governor; I bought 'em from my brother, Jim Watkins, what keeps a pub. down in Bermondsey."

"Oh, indeed," I remarked, with an ironical smile.

"You're a-grinning, are yer? Well, I'm telling you Gawd's truth."

"Of course he is," snarled the woman, "and you ain't a-got no business a-coming here to call us liars."

"I haven't yet called you liars," I said. "But if you got these things honestly, Mr. Stumps, why were you so anxious that we shouldn't see them?"

"Because I knowed as you'd make a bother, and ask all sorts o' questions. We poor devils that has to make our living out o' the river is just chevied about by you gents as if we was wermin. My brother as keeps the Blue Boar pub. in Bermondsey a-sold me that yer 'am and the rum, and I paid for 'em; and if you don't believe me, go and ax him."

"That is what I intend to do," I answered; "but in the meantime, my friend, I shall take charge of the things."

This announcement caused the ugly old woman to once more fire up, and she became so violent and so threatening that I told her I would handcuff her and take her to the station. But not even that would have stopped her if Stumps had not bundled her into the bedroom neck and crop, and told her that he would "larrup her hide off" if she didn't hold her noise. Having got rid of the termagant, he turned to me and said I was welcome to take the things, but that I should

find that I would "precious soon" have to bring them back at my own cost.

Although outwardly he appeared calm and collected, there were signs that he only controlled himself with a great effort, and that he was really boiling with rage and vexation.

Instructing my men to take the jar and the ham to the nearest station, we left. I had no fear but what I should be able to quickly lay my hands on Stumps again if I wanted him. Although I didn't believe his story, it was my place to put it to the test, so I lost no time in going to Bermondsey; and sure enough, in a low thoroughfare close to the river, I found a small beer-house called the Blue Boar, kept by a man called James Watkins. He was a typical ruffian in appearance—a thick-set, short man, with a clean-shaved fleshy face, and small bead-like eyes, close-cropped hair, and a sneaking, hang-dog expression. His likeness to Stumps was striking, and I began to think Stumps had told the truth.

"Have you a brother?" I asked.

"Yes, governor, I has."

"What is his name?"

"Bill Watkins; but he generally gets the name of Stumps, because he has two wooden legs."

"Was he here last night?"

"Yes. He's here mostnigh every night."

"Did he buy anything from you?"

"Yes," and here Jim Watkins eyed me furtively, and with a certain fierceness; and then, as if to purposely forestal my next question, he added, "I sold him a big Yankee ham and a jar o' rum."

Knowing the place was only a beer-shop, I asked him suddenly—

“Have you a licence to sell spirits?”

The fierceness increased in his bulldog-like face, and, with a menace in his attitude and voice, he growled as he leaned over the lead-lined counter—

“What right a’ you got a-asking me?”

“The right of the law.”

“You’re a Excise fellow, are you?” he demanded, with an expression of concentrated hatred, as if the very name of Excise fired his blood, as no doubt it did.

“No, I’m a detective fellow,” I answered.

My words caused him to pale and become more excited, and, drawing a dash of beer in a half-pint pewter pot, he poured it down his throat to give him Dutch courage or to steady his nerves, and then he exclaimed in jerky, broken accents—

“Well, I don’t care what you be, governor—I ain’t a done nothink that I’m ashamed on. I didn’t trade that rum on these premises, but I brought it from a sailor man, and sold it to my brother cheap.”

“If that’s true, no doubt you will be able to prove it,” I answered. “That is all I have to say at present.”

He seemed surprised and even relieved when he saw me leave the place, but if he had any idea he had got rid of me for good he was wrong. My opinion of Jim Watkins was by no means in his favour, and I had not a doubt in my own mind that he was one of the water-rats and a dangerous pest to society, and I thought I saw a chance of exterminating one lot of these objectionable animals. But there was another idea that flashed through my mind. Might not this man, directly or indirectly, have been mixed up in the robbery from the steamer, and consequently in the murder of Thames Tommy? It was only a possi-

bility, perhaps, but it laid hold of me, and grew and expanded as I reasoned the thing out. His position as a publican would make it comparatively easy for him to find a market for the stolen things—at any rate, so far as the wines and spirits were concerned; and was it not equally likely that the rum in possession of Stumps was part of the stolen spirits? At any rate, until I had proved myself right or wrong, I intended to stick to Jim Watkins.

One of my assistants in plain clothes had accompanied me, but had not entered the public-house. And giving him a few hasty instructions to remain on the watch, and be particularly vigilant, I hurried off to the Custom house; for if, as I suspected, Watkins had spirits and wines concealed on his premises, it was the duty of the Excise officers to deal with the case in the first instance, and they would be able to exercise their prerogative, and search the house. As some formalities had to be gone through, more than two hours and a half elapsed before I returned, in company with a representative of the Custom, and then to my astonishment and annoyance I found that my man, whom I had left on guard, had disappeared. However, the officer and I entered the house, and were met by Watkins's son, who told us his father had gone out. The son was a veritable chip of the old block, sullen and bulldog-like, but when we told him that we were empowered to search the house he smiled peculiarly, and, rubbing his dirty, coarse hands together, as if with some sense of self-gratification, he said—

“Certainly, gents. Me and the governor is honest as daylight, so we ain't a bit afeared.”

I thought to myself that he was protesting too much, but I made no remark. We began our search, going

into the cellars first, and from there to every part of the house. The search was thorough and methodical, but it resulted in nothing—that is, we found nothing that was irregular, and I will frankly confess I was annoyed and surprised. I had felt certain that we should find spirits on the premises, and my disappointment may be understood. But let it not be supposed my failure led me to reverse the opinion I had formed of Jim Watkins. I should have been prepared, even at that moment, to have staked a great deal that he was an unmitigated rascal. His cunning, however, had for the moment baffled me, and unless I could get evidence to prove that the traffic had been illegal, I should have to confess I had made a mistake in seizing the ham and jar of rum from Stumps, to whom, of course, they would have to be restored.

It is never pleasant when you have made certain calculations, based upon what you consider reliable data, to suddenly find yourself altogether wrong. It begets in one a sense of humiliation and a vexation of spirit which even to the most philosophical mind is irritating. I was irritated, and I admit it; and, having been up all the night and the greater part of the day, I returned to my home, intending to refresh myself with a bath, and then sleep my annoyance off. I had not been in more than half an hour before a hansom cab drove up, and out jumped my assistant. His manner and expression testified that he had something important to communicate, and in a moment I guessed that he had made a discovery, and that he had deserted his post from a sense of duty.

“Of course, you would be surprised to find me gone when you got back?”

“Yes, I was indeed. But now I read in your face that you had a good reason for going.”

“Yes, of course I had. You hadn’t been gone long before Watkins left his house. He was away twenty minutes, then he came back with a donkey-cart. He and another man—a young one—then brought from the house five large cases and loaded them on to the cart, and Watkins drove away with them. I followed as hard as I could, and never once lost sight of the cart, which drew up at last at a house on the river side close to Woolwich, and there the things were unloaded and taken into the house.”

At this information all bodily fatigue was forgotten, and my mind became active and sanguine again. It seemed that I was right after all as to the character of Watkins. My visit to his house had put him on his guard, and as soon as I had gone he had hastened to remove certain goods, which, it was obvious, he was afraid of being found there. There was something wrong, that was clear, and without a moment’s unnecessary delay I started with my assistant in a cab for Woolwich. It was dark when we arrived, but my assistant had no difficulty in going to the house again. It was one of the very old places still to be found on the banks of the Thames. It was built entirely of timber, and the front windows faced the river. There was a roughly constructed little wooden pier in front, and a boat was moored to it, so that the place was indeed very convenient for the water-rats.

It was some time before my repeated knocking at the door was answered. But at last the door was opened by a very old man, who carried in his hand a candle stuck in a beer-bottle. He was an evil-looking old man. His face was much pitted with small-pox, and his nose was hooked. But it was not these things that made him look evil; it was a crafty, sinister, cruel expression.

"You are acquainted with a man named Watkins—Jim Watkins?" I said, as he eyed me suspiciously through his horn-rimmed spectacles.

"Well, I ought to be," he said gruffly. "Jim's my son."

"Oh, indeed! Well, he left some goods here this afternoon."

"No, he didn't," cried the old fellow almost before I had finished my sentence, and by his anxiety betraying his desire to conceal the fact.

"Oh yes, he did," I answered, "and it's no use denying it."

"I tell you he didn't," was the angry answer; and the silly old fellow tried to shut the door in my face, but I forced my way into the passage, and my assistant followed.

"It's no use resisting me," I said. "I am a detective, and I want to know what is in those cases that your son brought here to-day."

On this the old man changed his tactics, and began to whine that some cases had been brought, but he knew nothing at all about them, and had no idea what was inside of them. His son had asked him to take care of them for a time.

"What do you do for a living?" I asked.

"I'm a waterman, and I've earned my living on the river since I was ten year o' age."

He seemed very much agitated, and was disposed to be garrulous, but I cut him short, and told him to show me where the cases were. Very reluctantly he led me down into a cellar, which seemed to be well stored with a miscellaneous collection of things. There were five large boxes there, which my assistant recognized as those he had seen brought on the donkey-cart.

Proceeding to open one of these, I found it to contain bottles of wine. The second and the third also contained wine; the fourth was filled with spirits, brandy, Hollands, whisky, and rum, together with a quantity of tobacco; while in the fifth were a sextant, a chronometer, and a quantity of sailor's clothing. These goods, then, were what had been stolen from the steamer on the night of the murder of Thames Tommy, and it seemed to me I was on the track of the murderer.

I at once despatched my assistant to the police station, and we took the old man into custody, and had the house placed in charge of the police. The same night I arrested Jim Watkins, and by ten o'clock the following morning I had my hand on Stumps.

It was clear now that I had made a fine haul of rats, and I was sanguine of unravelling the mystery of Thames Tommy's murder.

We soon brought to light that Jim Watkins had served a long time in penal servitude for burglary, and that his real name was Henry Freemantle. His brother (Stumps) had also served various terms of imprisonment, and his wife was also an old jail-bird; and the whole lot bore a very bad reputation. They were part of a gang of desperate characters who were not likely to stick at any crime. Henry Freemantle, *alias* Jim Watkins, in order to save himself from the charge of murder, made a statement to the effect that he had bought the things from a man named Joe Smith, who was known to the fraternity as "The Buffalo"; and, from information he supplied us with, we were enabled to lay our hands on "The Buffalo." He turned out to be a desperate ruffian, who had been

several times convicted. In this fellow's house we found a suit of blood-stained clothes, and also an old battered silver watch that belonged to poor old Thames Tommy, and which was identified beyond all dispute. We also arrested three other men who had aided in the robbery, and one of these fellows turned Queen's evidence, and we were enabled to bring the guilt of the murder clearly home to Smith, who was tried, convicted, and duly hanged at Horsemonger Lane Jail. The others were all sentenced to various terms of imprisonment; and I had the satisfaction of knowing that I had thus been successful in dispersing one band of the infamous water-rats.

A SPIDER'S WEB.

WHEN Carlyle, with his usual sour cynicism, said that the British Islands were peopled with so many millions of people, mostly fools, he uttered a great truth. He might have enlarged upon it, however, and for the British Islands have substituted the world, for human nature is wonderfully alike all over the globe. However bitter Carlyle's cynical dictum may seem to be, it is certain that if there were no fools, knaves would not flourish, and nobody knows this better than those who have to deal with crime and criminals. The greed for gain may be said to be the mainspring that moves men to wrong-doing, as it also impels the more honest portion of the community to walk into traps that are set with golden bait. The story I am about to tell, and which I think I have very appropriately named in calling it "A Spider's Web," will very clearly illustrate the singularly gullible nature of the public generally when the prospect of gaining money is held out to them. Clever rogues make a study of how best to trade on this gullibility, and one of the smartest rascals in the line that I have ever known was a fellow who bore the very unromantic patronymic of Muggleton—Jeremiah Muggleton. What the nationality of his parents was I do not know, but he himself was born in the town of Paisley, and in his youth was a weaver, as, I believe, his father before him had been. But Jeremiah was endowed with an amount of brain power

that might have enabled him to rise to a great height in human esteem had it only been properly balanced with moral principles. It is certain that he could have left his mark on the history of Good, as he has left it on the history of Evil, had it not been for what I think I am justified in terming a certain warping of his moral nature. He was ambitious and desirous of accumulating wealth, and in his endeavours to gain this end he threw scruples overboard. The name of Muggleton and the trade of weaving do not seem to have been to his taste, for he left his native town before he was fifteen, and repaired to Glasgow. There he called himself Arthur Sweeting, which certainly was an improvement on Muggleton, and he succeeded by some means in obtaining a situation in a lawyer's office as an errand boy. The smartness he displayed soon won him the notice of his employer, who made a clerk of him and sent him to a night-school. For five years he seems to have studied hard, and to have acquired something more than a smattering of education. One of his most striking accomplishments was penmanship. I don't know that I ever saw a man who could write such a splendid hand, and allied to this was the dangerous faculty of imitation. He could imitate any handwriting that was ever written, and it was to this perhaps that he owed his first plunge into evil ways.

When he was about twenty years of age he took advantage one day of the illness of his employer, and the absence of the manager, to imitate his employer's signature on a cheque, whereby he drew from the bank the sum of five hundred pounds. Then he sailed away for that land of freedom—America—in company with a lady almost old enough to be his mother, and whom he had known for the long period of a fortnight. I was

instructed at the time to try and arrest him before he spent his ill-gotten gains, but my efforts were not crowned with success; though I learnt so much of the story of his life as I have given up to this point. It is very certain that previous to committing the forgery he had laid his plans very artfully, so that no one with whom he was associated might suspect that anything was wrong. I traced him to Birmingham, thence to Bristol. Then he seems to have doubled back on his tracks again, and returned to Birmingham, and from there he went to Liverpool, where all signs of him were lost, and it was not until a long subsequent period I learnt that he went from Liverpool to America.

Some few years later there appeared amongst the long list of outside stock and sharebrokers in the city of London the names of "Moffat, Taylor & Co.," with an imposing address in Old Broad Street, that nest of philanthropic gentlemen who are always so anxious to make the fortunes of confiding people of a speculative turn of mind by putting them on to "good things." Moffat, Taylor & Co. began to advertise extensively in provincial papers, and they also sent out many thousands of circulars all over the country. It would seem that at first the firm really did some legitimate business in buying and selling stocks and shares, and presumably they made money. Then their advertisements began to appear in the London dailies, half columns at a time. At last a certain financial organ ventured to hint in pretty plain terms that Moffat, Taylor & Co. were spiders with voracious appetites for human flies. Whereupon the firm, through an eminent solicitor, threatened the proprietors of the paper with an action for libel unless an ample apology was published and five hundred pounds in cash paid at once. As the proprietor had

some reason to doubt the accuracy of the information he had received, and saw there would be considerable difficulty in getting proof, he, in a moment of weakness, consented to publish an apology, and to pay two hundred pounds, which terms were accepted, and proved a splendid advertisement for Moffat, Taylor & Co., who were not slow to make capital out of it. Indeed, they must have coined money for a time. But at last the the proprietor of the financial organ in question received a letter from a lady living in Coventry, in which she clearly proved that she had been swindled by Moffat, Taylor & Co. out of something like two thousand pounds. Determined, however, to err on the side of caution if he erred at all, he sent for me and instructed me to make such inquiries about the firm as would substantiate their *bonâ fides*, or justify him in denouncing them as swindlers.

In accordance with these instructions, I directed my efforts to trying to learn something about the individuals of the firm, and it was not long before I was in a position to say that "Taylor" was a myth, the "Co." a mystery, and that Moffat ran the concern himself.

This discovery was in itself important, and reflected suspiciously on Moffat, and one day I called at the office and inquired for him. The office was quite a swell place, fitted with three or four "tapes," while half-a-dozen clerks seemed to be up to the eyes in work. My desire, however, to see the principal was not then gratified, as I was told he was out of town; but the head clerk said that he was quite able to transact any business I might require. I told him that my business was of a private nature, and, thinking that he might be in league with Moffat, I did not display any anxiety to

see his employer, so as to avoid arousing any suspicion, but merely said that I would call in the course of a day or two. This I did, but only to be informed that Mr. Moffat was still out of town.

My suspicions having now received something like confirmation, I got hold of Mr. Moffat's private address—a villa residence at Surbiton—and going down there, I found he was living the life of a bachelor, his house being in charge of a lady housekeeper. Four other domestics were employed, besides a gardener, a stableman, and a coachman. But Mr. Moffat was not there, and his housekeeper informed me that I should find him at a certain address in Brighton.

I did not allow many hours to elapse before journeying down to Brighton and going to the address the housekeeper had given me, which was a very swell boarding-house in the most fashionable part of the Parade. I was told that there was no such person as Moffat there. But delicately worded inquiries on my part revealed the fact that a London gentleman, who was believed to be a stockbroker, and whose name was Edmund Mortimer, occupied a suite of rooms in the house, with his wife and little girl. Inferentially I came to the conclusion that Mr. Edmund Mortimer and Mr. Moffat were one and the same person. As it was of the highest importance, however, that I should act with the greatest caution, I did not ask to see Mr. Mortimer then, but returned to London, went down to Surbiton, called at Moffat's address there, and by the exercise of a little scientific finessing, I succeeded in seeing a photograph of Mr. Moffat. It represented a rather fine-looking man, of apparently about thirty years of age, with a handsome beard that hung down on his breast. He was slightly bald-headed, and it

seemed to me that there was an unmistakable colubrine expression about the face, especially in the eyes. It was certainly not a face calculated to inspire any one with confidence who had the slightest pretensions to be able to read that index to the human mind.

Being now in a position to recognize Mr. Moffat wherever I might meet him, I called once more at his office, only to learn that he was still out of town, and when I preferred a rather peremptory request for his address, a clerk gave me the name of an hotel in Brighton. On going to that hotel I found that Mr. Moffat permanently rented a room there, but very rarely used it, though a very considerable number of letters and telegrams went to the hotel for him, but he sent a servant daily to fetch them. I need scarcely say that the scent now was getting warm, and my suspicions were deepening. My next step was to call on Mr. Edmund Mortimer and obtain an interview with him, which I only succeeded in doing by sending up my card, on which was printed the unpretentious name of James Smith. As soon as Mr. Mortimer presented himself I recognized the original of the portrait I had seen at Moffat's house. There was the handsome beard, the bald head, and the colubrine expression. He was a tall, finely-built man, of really imposing presence, and with an affected, polished manner of speaking.

"Pardon me," I said, "I wanted Mr. Mortimer; but, if I am not mistaken, you are Mr. Moffat?"

I saw the colour fade from his face, and he became confused. He quickly recovered his presence of mind, however, and breaking into a laugh, whereby he revealed two rows of very even white teeth, he exclaimed—

"Oh, well—yes, I am. The fact is I have, for

reasons of my own—not very serious ones; I may inform you candidly there is a woman at the bottom of it all—been compelled to practise a little deceit. But now in return for this frankness, be good enough to tell me who you are, and what your business is?”

Detecting in his speech a Scotch accent which he tried hard to conceal, I answered his question by asking another.

“You are a native of Scotland, I believe?”

“His brow darkened, and he said irritably—

“Yes, I was born in Edinburgh, but left it many years ago; as I do not choose, however, to be questioned by an utter stranger, I shall order you out of the house unless you state your business.”

“Do not be impetuous,” I remarked. “Though you carried your threat into execution, I should decline to go until we are a little better acquainted. I am a detective, and my name is Dick Donovan. That statement will probably suggest to you the nature of my business.”

His manner underwent an entire change as I made this announcement, and he glanced nervously round the room. Then he broke into a laugh again, but it was obviously forced, and, stroking his beard in a quick, jerky, irritable way, he answered—

“Well, Mr. Donovan, you may be a very interesting person, and possibly, in your own estimation, a very clever person; but I confess that I do not divine the nature of your business, unless some one has been swindling me, and you have been good enough to interest yourself on my behalf.”

“It is the other way about, Mr. Moffat or Mortimer,” I said drily. “I have reason to think that the swindling has been on your side, and my object in

calling is to give you the opportunity of proving me right or wrong."

"Sir!" he exclaimed passionately, "this insinuation is an outrage, an insult, and I'll make you pay dearly for it. All my business, my whole career will bear the strictest investigation, and I defy you to get a shred of proof of your assertion."

"I shall be glad, I am sure, if I am wrong; but I have already learnt sufficient to warrant me in refusing to retract my insinuation, and I am prepared to take all the consequences of it if I have made a mistake."

He became still paler, and, rising hurriedly, he gave vent to an expression in which I was told to make a visit to the common enemy of mankind; and, ringing the bell, he instructed the servant who appeared to show me to the door, and he added—

"And see that under no circumstances is the scoundrel admitted again."

As my purpose was so far served I rose, and, bowing to him in mock politeness, said—

"We shall no doubt meet again, Mr. Moffat—it is well that the servant should know that your name is Moffat—and allow me to say that a man who wishes to succeed as a swindler should display more tact than you have done."

He was furious, and seemed half inclined to resort to personal violence, but thought better of it; and, wishing him good day, I left the house. So far as my instructions were concerned I had carried them out, and had got sufficient material to warrant any one in denouncing Moffat as an adventurer, and I lost no time in laying my information before the proprietor of the paper, who, still smarting from his former defeat, when he had been compelled to apologize and hand over two hundred

pounds, was prompt to take the matter up, and that week his paper contained a crushing *exposé* of the bogus firm of "Moffat, Taylor & Co." If the statements contained in the article had in any way been untrue, Moffat could have got swinging damages against the paper. As it was, he had the audacity to instruct his solicitor to threaten an action; but the bubble was pricked, and the *exposé* had done its work. Every post for the next few days brought shoals of letters from all parts of the country, and from all sorts and conditions of people—tradesmen, clergymen, widows, retired officers, clerks, servant girls, and the like—complaining that they had been swindled by Moffat, Taylor & Co. It was really wonderful how extensive had been the ramifications of Moffat's transactions; and there was no longer a doubt that he had bled his victims to the tune of many thousands of pounds.

On the strength of the evidence before us, a warrant was issued for the man's arrest, and it was placed in my hands for execution. But I was quite prepared to learn that he had bolted, nor was I mistaken. Four days before the issuing of the warrant he had drawn all his money out of the bank, had sold his horses and carriages at Surbiton, given a bill of sale on his furniture, and then decamped gorged with plunder. Of course the telegraph was put in motion, and his description sent all over the country, so I was not without hope that his arrest would be effected. At the same time, I felt convinced that I had no ordinary knave to deal with, and as he was well supplied with money, chances of escape were open to him that would not have been available to a man without means.

My first step was to interview his manager, a young man of about thirty, named Arthur Hopkirk. I was

strongly of opinion that he had been a party to the swindling, but I could get no evidence against him. I found that he had been a lawyer's clerk, and his people were respectable enough. Nevertheless, I would not and could not believe that he could have been ignorant of his employer's doings; and though I could get hold of nothing to justify his arrest, I resolved to keep an eye on him.

My next step was to go down to Brighton, hoping to obtain some clue; but I found the lady who had passed as Mrs. Mortimer in great distress, for the fellow had left her and her daughter—a charming little girl of six and a half—penniless. She assured me that she had not the slightest idea but that he was carrying on a perfectly legitimate business, and I had several reasons for believing that she spoke the truth. She informed me that she had first met him seven years ago in London. He had just then come from America. Soon after their meeting he returned to America, and wanted her to go with him; but, as her mother was in a delicate state of health, she refused. He corresponded with her, however, and promised her marriage, and about three years later he returned, and the intimacy was renewed. In order to corroborate her statements she showed me some of his letters, and I was instantly struck by the remarkable writing. I felt sure that I had seen that handwriting before, though for the moment I could not call to mind where. It was a beautiful, small, round hand, wonderfully like copper-plate. Every letter was perfectly formed, every up stroke as fine as a hair and yet distinct, while all the down strokes were of a uniform thickness. It was a style of penmanship very rarely seen now, and, once seen, not likely to be forgotten. Suddenly, it flashed

upon my mind that I had seen something very similar years before in Glasgow, and the writer then was a certain Jeremiah Muggleton, *alias* Arthur Sweeting, who had forged his employer's name to a cheque for five hundred pounds. Mrs. Mortimer—for so I will continue to call her—knew nothing of Moffat's history anterior to her meeting him. She had always been led to believe that he was an American.

On reflecting on the Glasgow case, with which I had to do, I called to mind that Muggleton had gone to Birmingham, thence to Bristol, and back to Birmingham again. There was an inference I drew from this double visit to the Midland town, which was that there had been some special attraction for him in Birmingham. I elicited from Mrs. Mortimer that she had once, and only once, heard him refer to a married sister of his in Birmingham, but he had never mentioned her name. This was a clue—not a very pronounced one, but still a clue—and I determined to follow it up.

I had preserved amongst my collection of souvenirs of cases in which I had been interested a specimen of Mr. Jeremiah Muggleton's beautiful handwriting, and comparing this with a specimen of Mr. Moffat's, which I procured from Mrs. Mortimer, I found that they were identical. Here, then, was a discovery—Muggleton, Sweeting, and Moffat were one and the same person, and Moffat being Muggleton was wanted for forgery committed years before in Glasgow. Of course, there was the possibility that the similarity in the handwriting was a coincidence, but it was only a possibility. However, I resolved to try and find Mr. Muggleton's sister, if such a being was in existence, and with that object in view I went down to Birmingham. To go and hunt for a person whose name I did not know in a great town like

Birmingham seemed like a wild-geese chase ; but then I had a plan which I hoped would be productive of some good result. Let me first explain that I reasoned in this way—

Moffat, being in possession of a large sum of money, would be anxious to get out of the country with it as soon as possible, and he would lose no time in placing distance between himself and those who were anxious to make closer acquaintance with him. And from the fact that we had got no information of his whereabouts, seemed to me to be fairly conclusive that he had managed to leave the kingdom. Now, it was important from a legal point of view that if Moffat was Muggleton some indubitable proof of that fact should be forthcoming, and if I was able to discover that the married sister Moffat had referred to as living in Birmingham had been born Muggleton, I should be in possession of the necessary proof ; and, as I have already said, being tolerably sure that Moffat himself was not in Birmingham, I inserted the following advertisement in all the daily papers :—

“MUGGLETON.—Any one by this name living in Birmingham will greatly oblige by communicating at once with Richard Muggleton, *poste restante*, General Post Office.”

Perhaps I need scarcely say that the name Richard Muggleton was used simply as a lure, and that there was no one by the name of Muggleton in Birmingham, as was proved by the directory. But what I hoped was that I should find out the whereabouts of Moffat's married sister if her maiden name had been Muggleton. In short, my advertisement was a trap, and did its work splendidly. In a few days I received a letter from an address in Deritend, one of the suburbs of

Birmingham. The letter was signed by "Mrs. Margaret Hammond," who stated that before her marriage she was a Miss Muggleton, and she expressed great eagerness to know who Richard Muggleton was, as she had never heard of a Richard in the family.

An hour after receiving that letter I was at the address given. Mrs. Margaret Hammond, I found, was a lady-like woman, verging on middle life, and was married to a gentleman who was employed in one of the steel pen manufactories. I soon learned that she had been born in Paisley, but had left there when she was twelve years of age to live with an aunt in Birmingham, who had brought her up. She had a brother named Jeremiah, who was formerly in a lawyer's office in Glasgow, but he went to America, and she had not heard from him since. All doubts as to Moffat's identity were now set at rest after this information. Moffat, the swindler, was Muggleton, the forger. As I was convinced that his sister knew nothing of his evil-doings, I could not find it in my heart to tell her, and I explained that I had known her brother years ago in Glasgow, and was anxious to meet him, and, having some reason to think he had a relative in Birmingham, I had advertised in the hope it might lead to my discovering him.

This plausible story—accurate in the main—prevented her from suspecting my true object, and enabled me to take my leave without destroying her peace of mind. That she would learn of her brother's crime in the process of time I had no doubt. But it was satisfaction to me that I was not called upon to inform her of it, for she was the mother of a charming family, and I proved conclusively that she was highly respectable and respected, and that she had no inkling she was allied by blood ties to an audacious forger and swindler.

To lay my hands on Muggleton was now the object to which I directed all my energies, and I did not doubt that if I could once get him within the meshes of the law his previous bad record would ensure him receiving such a sentence that it would be many a long year before he would again have the chance of preying on his fellow-men. Muggleton Moffat, however, was not a fool, although a consummate knave; and instead of lingering about the scenes of his triumphs, he bade farewell for a time to his native country, and I got unmistakable evidence that he had gone to Spain, where he probably began to dream out those plans for the future which, when put into operation, were destined to place him on the criminal roll as one of the most remarkable rogues of modern times. While the cleverness he displayed was such, as will presently be seen, that had it been directed into a proper channel he might have built for himself a lasting monument in the hearts of his fellow-beings, instead of bringing down on his head the execration of thousands of ruined men and women.

It goes without saying that I was very greatly annoyed to think that this consummate rascal and clever swindler had slipped through my fingers. But then detectives are not always successful except in novels. I had an instinctive feeling, however, that we had not heard nor seen the last of Mr. Muggleton Moffat. Temporary success makes such men reckless and more daring, and one of the peculiarities of the professional criminal is that he can hardly resist the desire to return to the scenes of his triumphs. And so I consoled myself with the belief that on some future occasion I should become better acquainted with Muggleton. But between four and five years passed, during which I neither heard tale nor tidings of this much-

wanted person. Time had blunted my memory of him, for during those years I had had many cases to deal with, and had made the acquaintance of numerous men and women who had written their names on the roll of shame and crime. If I ever thought of him, it was with a sigh of regret that he had been slippery enough to elude the law's grasp.

About this time there suddenly burst upon the world the dazzling prospect of every one growing rich beyond the dreams of avarice, providing such a person was willing to purchase shares in the "Golden Land Mining and Settlement Scheme Company, Limited." Such was the heading to the advertisements that filled the principal papers in the United Kingdom, and appeared simultaneously in many of those of France, Germany, and Italy. According to the announcements, a Syndicate, at the head of which was the "Hon. Evelyn Templeton Pinto," of the "New York Land Colonization Company," had organized the scheme. The announcements set forth that the Syndicate had acquired an enormous track of magnificent country in Mexico, which was well watered, well timbered, and fabulously rich in gold and silver. The climate, resources, and productiveness of the country were set forth in glowing terms that were well calculated to turn the brains of thoughtless people; while the names of assayers were given who had proved beyond doubt that there was gold and silver ore on the estate which yielded as much as twenty ounces of pure metal to the ton. With touching philanthropy, the Syndicate now offered a share in all this wealth to the world at large. The capital was set down at the trifling figure of six millions sterling, of which four millions were at the disposal of the public in pound shares.

If the capital was forthcoming, the Company proposed—besides colonizing the country—to open mines, build towns, engage in agricultural pursuits, make canals, and do sundry other things that it was calculated would enable the shareholders to reap huge profits and grow wealthy by leaps and bounds.

The Board of Directors was apparently a very strong one, and besides London, the Company had opened offices in New York, Paris, Berlin, and Rome. Everything appeared to be perfectly *en règle*, both as regards bankers, registration, auditors, solicitors, &c.; and in the advertisements it was stated that the lists would close on a certain day for London, and the day after for the country.

The appositeness of Carlyle's dictum was now shown in a very striking manner, for people rushed in their thousands to buy shares in this wonderful speculation, though nobody seemed to have thought it worth while to make some inquiries about the property through a disinterested channel, and to learn the antecedents of the gentleman with the high-sounding name, the Hon. Evelyn Templeton Pinto, and of a co-director of his who was ticketed as "Richard Walter Wedmore, Esq.," formerly "clerk to the Supreme Court of Judicature, State of Alabama," then of Upper Phillimore Gardens, West Kensington, London. The South Sea Bubble could scarcely have dazzled and deluded people more than did this gigantic scheme for enriching every one who invested in it.

And so the little game went merrily along. On the duly appointed day the lists closed, and the flaming advertisements that had attracted so much attention were withdrawn from the papers. What is everybody's business is, according to the axiom, nobody's

business, consequently this gigantic swindle, for swindle it was, succeeded for the time. The public rushed at the golden bait dangled before their eyes, and flung their money into the coffers of the Hon. Evelyn Templeton Pinto & Co. Britons were not the only ones who were lured by the spider's syren song of—

“Come into my parlour ;”

The cautious Frenchman, the calculating German, the thrifty Italian were alike drawn into the pretty web set for them.

There was one person, however, who had watched with his eyes open, but held his peace for the time. That person was the proprietor of the financial paper which had been instrumental in exposing Moffat & Co., and whom I will refer to as Smith. This gentleman was a shrewd and far-seeing man ; but experience had taught him caution. As a financial journalist, it was part of his duty to deal with swindles of this kind ; but it was no part of his duty to recklessly thrust his head into the lion's jaws. His first step, therefore, was to write a note to me asking me to call upon him, which I did at my earliest convenience.

“Donovan,” he began, “I want you to look into the affairs of the Golden Land Mining and Settlement Scheme Company, for I'm convinced the whole thing is a fraud and a swindle, and I'm going to expose the business. But we must go to work systematically and cautiously.”

The result of my interview with Mr. Smith was that he commissioned me to proceed at once first to New York, and make some inquiries about the Hon. Evelyn Templeton Pinto ; second, to Mexico, and see with my own eyes the wondrous country that the Syndicate had purchased ; and third, to Alabama, to look into the

antecedents of Richard Walter Wedmore, Esq. This journey, although involving Mr. Smith in a large outlay, was decided upon as calculated to go to the very root and heart of the affair, and would at once prove the truth or falsehood of the Company's statements. If it was found that everything was as set forth in the prospectus Mr. Smith alone would be the loser; but if, on the other hand, the whole affair was a swindle, he would very largely gain in the increased publicity that the *exposé* would give his paper.

In a few days I was on my way to New York, and on arrival I lost no time in inquiring into the Hon. Evelyn Templeton Pinto's career, and six hours later I should have had no hesitation in openly denouncing him as an adventurer. Little was really known of him, beyond the fact that he could lay no claim to the prefix of Hon.; that he had been a dabbler on Wall Street for some time, but his reputation was not good. He had subsequently floated a small company called "The New York Land Colonization Company," but nobody seemed to know what the objects of the company were, nor where their field of operation was. One fact was indubitable, the directors had spent or pocketed all the money, and had never issued a balance sheet; but as no one had taken any active steps to prosecute, the law had not interfered, and Mr. Pinto turned his active and inventive brain to some other money-making scheme. When he arrived in the United States, and where he came from, were two points about which I could get no satisfactory information; but one thing was clear, and that was he was a naturalized American citizen. Having learned so much, I turned my steps south to the "golden land" of Mexico, and not without considerable difficulty did I discover where the

“marvellously rich” property of the Company was situated. My inquiries elicited the fact that about two thousand acres of Government land had been purchased for a sum total of something under one thousand pounds by the “Hon. Evelyn Templeton Pinto” and “Richard Walter Wedmore, Esq.,” described as American citizens. Their object in purchasing the land was, they stated, to rear horses. The track of country they acquired was absolutely a desert—an arid waste of sweltering sand—on which never a tree grew to give the traveller shelter from the torrid sun, and where rain was hardly ever known to fall. This, then, was the “enormous track of magnificent country, which was well watered, well timbered, and fabulously rich in gold and silver.” The timber consisted of patches of cacti, and the water was contained in a brackish pool in an oasis less than two acres in extent. As for the climate, the only thing that could live and flourish in it was a deadly species of snake that literally swarmed, and, approximating very closely in colour to the sand, it was difficult to discern it until you were close to it. Travelling, therefore, in this salubrious spot, that, according to the prospectus, offered so many advantages for colonization, was a very risky thing; and so barren was the country that one wondered how even the snakes picked up a living. So much, then, for the climate and resources of this delightful country. And now for the gold and silver. It appeared that in one corner of the estate some patches of quartz cropped up, and there was a tradition that at some period or other a party of wandering Indians had discovered a little gold about this quartz. But since then the reefs had been exhaustively prospected, with the result that though specks of gold were here and there discernible, the

precious metal was not to be found in anything like paying quantity. If, as the prospectus of the Company set forth, specimens of quartz had been taken from the estate which yielded on an average twenty ounces to the ton, then it was evident they had been placed there first. That is, the ground had been "salted" by the swindlers. As for silver, there was not a vestige of it to be found within many hundreds of miles of that part.

I next turned my attention to Richard Walter Wedmore, Esq., and proceeded to Alabama, but only to learn that no such individual was known at the Supreme Court of Judicature in that State; nor, indeed, could I find any one who had the slightest knowledge of the interesting gentleman.

After an absence of ten weeks I returned to London armed with the facts I have stated, and laid them before Mr. Smith, and we discussed our plan of action. We ascertained that upwards of a million sterling had been subscribed by the deluded shareholders, and the thing was to try and save as much of this money as possible. That, however, was not altogether an easy matter, because if we exposed the swindle right off the directors would take means to move the money out of the country, even if they had not already done so; and, of course, we had no *locus standi* that would have enabled us to have got an attachment. The Company paid its way, and there is little question but what the directors were hoping to draw in another pile before the bubble was burst, and it is highly probable they would have succeeded.

In order that I might make the personal acquaintance of the Hon. Evelyn Templeton Pinto, I called several times at the Company's offices, but he was always out; nor was I any more successful with Richard Walter

Wedmore, Esq. Neither did a visit to their private address produce any better results. The answer I received was they were abroad. This was suspicious, and I turned my attention to the managing director of the Company, a gentleman whose name appeared on the prospectus of the Company as Henry Rice Johnstone, Esq., C.E. He was a small man who habitually wore spectacles of smoked glass. He was as cantankerous as an irritated wasp, and as generally objectionable as the snakes I had found on the Company's wonderful estate. It was very clear that Mr. Johnstone was suspicious that there was smoke in the air, and that an explosion might burst at any moment, and I learned incidentally that he had given strict orders to the clerks, who seemed to be chiefly employed in doing nothing in particular, that they were not to answer any questions I might put to them. So, one day, meeting the little bespectacled gentleman in the street as he was issuing from the office, I tackled him, and in a somewhat peremptory manner demanded to know when and where I could see Pinto and Wedmore. My tone and manner irritated Mr. Johnstone more than usual, and he demanded to know what the "deuce" I wanted. I said my business was of a private nature, whereupon, with a triumphant sneer, he answered—

"Well, both the Hon. Mr. Pinto and Mr. Wedmore are in New York on business in connection with the Company."

I bluntly told him I did not believe this, when, probably thinking to get rid of me altogether, he put his hand in his pocket, drew out an envelope bearing the New York post-mark, and addressed to himself.

"There," he said, with a snarl, "read that," as he thrust a letter into my hand.

I could scarcely restrain a start as I noticed the handwriting on the envelope; and, drawing out the letter itself, I read the following:—

“Fifth Avenue Hotel, New York.

“Wed. and I have arrived safely. Have not time now to do more than make this bare announcement. Hope everything will go smoothly during our absence. Write by every mail.

“Yours as ever,

“E. T. PINTO.”

This curt note was in the same handwriting as the address on the envelope; that handwriting—which once seen was never to be forgotten—I had seen twice before: it was the handwriting of Jeremiah Muggleton, *alias* Sweeting, *alias* Moffat. I need scarcely say that the discovery was a revelation to me, for I had not before suspected that the “Hon. Evelyn Templeton Pinto” was the notorious Moffat.

“I apologize,” I said to Johnstone, “for having doubted your word,” and as I spoke I put the letter into my pocket with an assumed air of absent-mindedness. “Can you tell me when your friends are likely to be back?”

“I don’t know,” he answered gruffly; “and please to return me the letter.”

“If you will allow me,” I said, “I should like to keep it.”

“Why?” he demanded, in a tone that betrayed anxiety.

“Oh, merely to satisfy myself on a certain point.”

“No; I will not permit you to keep it. Return it to me immediately!”

“With or without your permission I shall retain it,”

I remarked to his consternation, and I saw a look of alarm sweep across his face.

"Then I'll give you in charge for stealing," he stammered.

"Very good. Shall we walk along until we meet a policeman?"

His presence of mind seemed to have left him, and in a halting, hesitating way he answered—

"Yes—no; well—that is, yes. Come along."

He moved away down the street, and very soon came across the object of our quest.

"This man has stolen a letter from me," said Mr. Johnstone excitedly, "and I give him in charge."

I made myself known to the policeman, who of course declined to have anything to do with the matter, and the result was Johnstone slunk away with a very hang-dog look.

I hurried off to Mr. Smith and told him of the discovery I had made, and we both agreed that the time for action had come. Two of the ringleaders in this gigantic swindle were out of the country, but in order to prevent the others from going it was necessary for me to apply for warrants for their arrest. The following day Mr. Smith published in his paper a long *exposé* of the fraud that had been perpetrated, and at the same time I laid sworn information before a magistrate and got his order for the arrest of Johnstone and his colleagues. The little man, however, had already taken fright and bolted, but five others, including the secretary, were arrested; but as no evidence was forthcoming against the secretary he was discharged, but the others were remanded.

Having ascertained that Johnstone was a married man, or passed as such, I went out to his house at

Brompton to learn if his wife had accompanied him in his flight or not. A servant whom I saw told me that Mrs. Johnstone was at home, but as she was getting ready to go into the country it was doubtful if she would see me. I told the girl it was not the slightest consequence, and that I would call again at some future time. I went away, but did not lose sight of the house. I suspected that if it was true that Mrs. Johnstone was going away, she was going to join her husband, and so I waited and watched for developments.

I waited three hours, then my patience was rewarded, for an empty cab drove up; a quantity of luggage was brought from the house, a lady, elegantly dressed, followed, and got into the cab, which then drove away. I followed in a hansom and landed at Euston Station, where the lady booked by the limited mail for Dublin. I travelled by the same train, and felt that the chase was getting exciting. But little time was spent in Dublin, for the lady took the train for Queenstown, and as soon as I learnt that, her motive seemed plain to me. She was going to join her husband there, or catch the outward-bound New York steamer from Liverpool, her husband having preceded her. My first conjecture proved right, for she drove to an hotel in Queenstown, and I ascertained that Johnstone was staying there, but the steamer was expected in at midnight, and he had given notice that he was going to America in her. It was a cunningly laid little scheme of his, but I had been able to overreach his cunning, and was there to frustrate his plan. I allowed him to enjoy a *tête-à-tête* supper with his wife, and I was nothing loth to refresh the inner man myself after the long journey.

It was eleven o'clock when my gentleman arose from

the table. He had dined or supped sumptuously, as I knew, and there had been a liberal supply of champagne. He sauntered to the door, chewing a toothpick. It was a splendid July night, the stars shone brilliantly, the winds slept, the sea in the harbour was as clear as a mill-pond. I went quietly up to the little man, and, touching him on the shoulder, said, as I raised my hat—

“Good evening, Mr. Johnstone. We meet again sooner than you anticipated, I suspect.”

The toothpick fell from between his lips; he seemed to stagger, and I thought he would have fallen to the ground.

“Who the devil are you?” he demanded, in a rasping voice as if something was choking him.

“Oh, you cannot have forgotten me so soon,” I answered. “My name is Donovan. I am a detective, and I hold a warrant for your arrest.”

I laid my hand on his shoulder; he started away and dived his hand into his coat-pocket, but I seized him, and after a slight struggle took a loaded revolver from him. Whether he intended to shoot himself or me I don't know, for he would make no statement, but sunk into sullen silence.

There was a terrible scene when his wife learnt the truth. She was a young and handsome woman, and I wondered what attraction she had seen in him. Of course I took possession of all the luggage, and the following morning we returned to London. When Johnstone's luggage came to be searched we found twenty-two thousand pounds, partly in notes and gold, but mainly in a draft on a New York bank. It was but a small part of the plunder, but still worth recovering. The house at Brompton where he had lived had been

hired furnished, and was left in charge of a housekeeper, who had been given to understand that the master and mistress had been suddenly called to America on business, but that they intended returning in a few weeks.

The news of the arrest soon spread, and added to the excitement that Mr. Smith's *exposé* in the paper had caused. As the directors had fled a Receiver was appointed by the shareholders, but it was found that there were only about twenty thousand pounds in the bank. It was therefore clear that the enormous capital subscribed had been smuggled away by the swindlers. The same story came from France, Italy, and Germany, and it soon became evident that the swindle was one of the most gigantic of modern times.

At the instigation of his wife, Johnstone volunteered to give information, hoping thereby to lighten his own sentence. His real name was Ricardo, and he was a native of Manchester, in England, where his father had been in a large way of business, but having failed he emigrated with his family to the United States. The son entered a surveyor's office in Philadelphia, where he was for many years, but got into trouble through misappropriating money. He soon afterwards made the acquaintance of Muggleton, who was then passing under the name of Pinto, and was associated with a man who was known as Wedmore, who called himself a civil engineer, but whose real name, Ricardo had discovered, was Arthur Hopkirk. They all three of them subsequently went to Mexico, at the suggestion of Muggleton, who said that he had a scheme whereby he expected to get two or three millions of money out of the public. He was then in possession of a little money, and with this the land was bought. They then went to Washington, and on the strength of representations he made

as to his enormous possessions in Mexico, he borrowed a considerable sum of money, and with this he purchased some valuable specimens of gold quartz, with which he salted the estate. Then he sent down an engineer, who was bribed to make a false report, and say that he had procured specimens from the quartz reefs on the estate. The specimens, on being assayed, were found to be phenomenally rich in metal. Ricardo drew up a report of a survey he was supposed to have made, in which, in glowing terms, he described "the well wooded and well watered country," and dwelt enthusiastically on the magnificence of the climate, the richness of the soil, &c. All thus being prepared and ready, the swindlers started for London, and had no difficulty in getting directors to join the Board, and branch offices were opened on different parts of the Continent.

So for a time affairs went merrily on. The money poured in, and as Muggleton, Hopkirk, and Ricardo had the chief control of the finances, they took good care to transfer large sums to America. If it had not been for my frustrating it, their plan was to issue another appeal to the public for subscriptions on debenture bonds.

Armed with a warrant and the necessary papers to enable me to apply for their extradition, I returned to America to effect the arrest of Muggleton and his factotum, Hopkirk. The news of the *exposé* had already reached the country when I arrived, and I found that the birds had flown, but they were arrested in Colorado while endeavouring to make their way to San Francisco, where they intended to take passage for India. They were brought back to New York, and were subsequently handed over to me on an extradition warrant, and I conveyed them to England.

Muggleton's career had come to a close. He disgorged all his illgotten gains, but this did not save him from a life sentence of penal servitude; his previous record was too bad to allow of anything lighter being passed. Hopkirk got twenty years, and Ricardo, in view of the information he had given, was sentenced to ten years. Two of the other directors got five, and another three, while another was discharged, as it was proved that he had acted without the slightest knowledge that there was anything wrong. Although much of the money was recovered, a large sum had been squandered, and the poor shareholders had to suffer a heavy loss. In some cases it meant utter ruin; in others it produced despair, madness, and several suicides resulted. Altogether it was a terrible business, but there was some satisfaction in knowing that the arch swindler had met with the doom he so richly merited, and that never again would he have the chance of preying on the credulity of his fellow-creatures.

THE STORY OF THE NASH DIAMOND.

MR. JOHN NASH was a Glasgow manufacturer, who at the age of thirty-five found himself in possession of an enormous fortune. His own start in life was fairly good, but his father before him had begun as a weaver on a paltry weekly wage; but by dint of self-denial, and the exercise of the thrift which by a fiction is supposed to be peculiarly a Scotch trait, he managed, when in middle life, to commence business on his own account as a manufacturer of the necessary appliances for fitting up weaving mills, and having invented an improvement in the shuttle and one or two other parts of weaving machinery, he began to prosper; but then, as is a common occurrence in such cases, he tumbled into his grave. The hardships and privations of youth, his voluntary semi-starvation in order that he might save money, had undermined his constitution; so that when money did come to him he could not enjoy it, and was cut off just as some of the sweets of life were touching his lips. However, he had laid the foundation stone of prosperity for his family. John was the only son, and the business was to be carried on by the executors until John became old enough to take charge of it himself. Inheriting his father's inventive faculty, and displaying it in a much higher degree than the father had ever done, John turned his attention to effecting general improvements in weaving machinery; and these improvements, being patented, were so valuable that

they were as good as a gold mine. So that when still a young man Mr. Nash was the fortunate possessor of a fortune that could be counted by hundreds of thousands. Although in the ordinary sense he was a modest and unassuming man, he was strongly desirous that his name should be more widely known than it could be by being merely associated with improvements in machinery, which had no interest for the public at large. Many ways were open to him to attain his desire. He might have written a book, but the literary ability had been denied him. It is very rarely, indeed, that an inventor is a literary man, even in a very limited sense. He might have built a church, endowed a hospital, founded a school. But, after all, such fame as these things would have given him would have been relatively local, and he aimed at being universally known.

While pondering on the subject, it chanced one day that he took up one of the monthly magazines, in which was an interesting article on some of the most celebrated diamonds of the world, and it struck him that his name would associate well with a big brilliant, and have a chance of being handed down to posterity. Perhaps from the strictly ethical standpoint it was not a very laudable ambition. But with that I have nothing to do. Men think according to their lights and act according to their promptings. Mr. Nash was wealthy, and he asked himself why he should not buy a diamond to which he could give his name, and which might become historically known.

I understand that for a considerable time he turned the subject over in his mind, for he was not the man to act impetuously, and he saw that his idea was not as easy of realization as it seemed on the first blush. Not that it was impossible by any means; but it was

necessary that he should purchase a stone that was unknown to the world, in order that he might be identified with it in such a way that his name could not be separated from it. Here was where the difficulty lay. He might, of course, have commissioned some one to make the purchase for him, but that plan did not recommend itself to his mind, for not only was there considerable risk of his being defrauded out of large sums of money, but he would not gain the same *éclat* as if he himself brought an unknown diamond to light. And the more he dwelt on it, the more it seemed to him probable that amongst some of the petty potentates of Oriental lands there must be numerous diamonds of great value, and yet without histories. The result of his cogitations was that he resolved to go in search of a diamond himself, and thereby not only enjoy the pleasures of travel, but by having no middleman to deal with he would be less likely to be defrauded. Although a married man, he had no family, having lost his only two children. He was desirous that his wife should accompany him in his wanderings, but as she was in feeble health she thought it would be better both for him and her that she should remain behind.

Under these circumstances, Mr. Nash began to cast about among his relatives with a view to fixing on somebody who would be a likely and agreeable travelling companion. Now, it chanced that amongst his kinsfolk was a half cousin by the name of Wilfrid Guthrie, who was, and had been for many years, in business as a jeweller in a northern town in Scotland. It seemed but natural, therefore, that Mr. Nash should turn to his relative, whose knowledge of precious stones would no doubt be of great service in such a case. Consequently negotiations were opened, although it

appears that a certain coolness had existed between the two men for a long time. And the result was that, though Mr. Guthrie was a married man with a family, he expressed his willingness to accompany his kinsman, his eldest son being left in charge of the business during his absence.

These preliminaries having been settled and arranged, and Mr. Nash having read up all the literature he could get hold of that dealt with celebrated diamonds, the two set out on their quest, and it may be safely asserted that neither of them dreamed for a moment that the journey was to be productive of such strange results as those that followed.

They directed their steps in the first instance to India, landing at Bombay, whence they journeyed to Calcutta. At this period the King of Oude was a prisoner in the hands of the British, and was confined in an old palace at Garden Reach, on the banks of the Hooghly, four miles from Calcutta. It was said, upon what authority I know not, that the ex-King was not only a connoisseur of brilliants, but had some extraordinarily fine ones in his possession; and, in consequence of this report, Mr. Nash and his relative obtained permission to visit the prisoner. It turned out, however, that the King was not possessed of any diamonds; but when he learned the object his visitors had in view, he recommended them to apply to a native jeweller, named Abdhulla Ahmed, who was reputed to be the greatest authority in India on precious stones, and knew where every big diamond was that had been brought to light within the last forty years. The man had for years resided in Delhi, but had left just before the outbreak of the Mutiny, and the King could give no information as to his whereabouts at that time. Although

the country was still in a very unsettled state, Mr. Nash and his companion decided on going to Delhi, where they arrived in due course, and were informed that Abdhulla Ahmed was living in Benares. The wonders of the Moghul city were sufficient to detain the travellers there for some weeks, at the end of which time they proceeded to the Holy City—Benares—where without much difficulty they found the person they wanted.

Although Ahmed had several stones of considerable value in his possession, he had nothing that approached Mr. Nash's requirement. But he said he knew that there was an uncut diamond of enormous size in possession of a very high dignitary attached to the Court of the Shah of Persia, but its owner had never had it cut, and had endeavoured to keep its possession a secret, because by a law of Persia the Shah could lay claim to every diamond in his realm that was above a given weight. On certain conditions, Ahmed undertook to journey to Persia in search of the wonderful diamond, and, after long negotiation and much legal business, Mr. Nash commissioned him to start without loss of time, and if possible secure the diamond and bring it back with him. The man set off, promising to be back in Benares in about seven months.

During the interim Mr. Nash and his companion travelled through India, returning to Benares about the appointed time, and soon after Abdhulla Ahmed came back from his long and arduous journey, and, as his quest and negotiations had been successful, he brought with him the much-coveted diamond. It was described as being about the size of a pigeon's egg, irregular in shape, with a slight flaw at one end, and looking altogether "like a lump of bay salt." Mr. Guthrie

pronounced the gem to be a very fine one, and declared that though there would be a good deal of waste in the cutting, it would still be a kingly stone, and become famous amongst the world's collection. The price demanded for it was a little fortune, but Mr. Nash was not deterred. He was, in fact, committed too deeply to withdraw, even if he had been disposed to do so. So he effected the purchase, and resolved to carry the stone to Paris, there to have it polished and cut.

The somewhat romantic story of the search for and acquisition of this diamond by Mr. Nash found its way into some of the leading papers of India. It is very likely that Mr. Nash himself was at pains to get the story published. However, that is a detail that has no bearing on what follows, and is quite immaterial. The fact remains that the account was published, and even at this early stage of ownership Nash began to taste the sweets of fame. A man who could afford to give the price that he did for a single stone, and was willing to pay it, could hardly escape publicity, and a good many people, actuated by nothing more than vulgar curiosity, forced their acquaintance upon him.

From India the story found its way into the English papers, and thence into the journals of Mr. Nash's native town of Glasgow, where much curiosity and interest were aroused; and the diamond seemed to promise its owner that fame he so much desired. As he subsequently informed me, in order to salve his conscience for the useless expenditure of so large a sum of money, Mr. Nash determined that the gem, after it was polished, should be exhibited at a trifling charge in all the towns where it was likely to arouse any interest, and the money thus derived was to be devoted to purposes of charity; and he also determined to set aside

for a number of years a sum equivalent to the interest on the purchase money, such sum to be also spent in charity. And finally, when his name had become indissolubly associated with it, the gem was to be sold, and half the purchase money was to be applied to building and founding an orphan asylum. Men have certainly travelled to fame by many, and sometimes by strange roads, but the way which Mr. Nash proposed to himself was probably unique. He was also destined to have a forcible illustration of the trite but true proverb about the proposals of man and the disposals of God. Mr. Nash's first thought was to send his newly-acquired property, heavily insured, through the hands of some agent, to Paris. And had he done so, I do not suppose I should ever have been able to tell the story of the "Nash Diamond." In this case first thoughts were decidedly the best, for the second ones were responsible for the disaster that followed.

Although Mr. Nash had paid such an enormous price for the diamond, the relatively paltry sum needed for the insurance risk weighed with him in his decision. With such men inconsistency is not infrequently a strong trait, and surely nothing could have been more inconsistent than the objection to pay a comparative trifle, when he had so readily parted with what would have been a fortune to many men, for the sake of acquiring an article that had no practical use. It was, after all, but a glittering bauble, and must ever remain so. But its owner, as he told me, argued that, as Ahmed had carried the gem safely on his person during the long overland journey from Persia, he could surely convey it himself with equal safety to Paris. It was not a logical argument, because the circumstances and conditions were different. But, as any stick is good

enough to beat a dog with, so any argument does when a man wishes to be penny wise and pound foolish.

With a view to the better protection of the diamond during transit, Mr. Nash had an iron box made for it in Benares, under the superintendence of his relative. The box was in the form of a small safe, with a perfectly flush lid, that fastened with three intricate locks, which could only be opened by three different keys, each one of a totally different construction. The box weighed not far short of a hundredweight; and embedded in the lid, and securely fastened from the inside with screws, was a brass plate on which Mr. Nash's name and address were inscribed. But these were not the only precautions, for the diamond itself was enclosed in a steel casket about half the size of a small tobacco-box. The lid of the casket shut with a secret spring, and unless the secret of the spring was known the lid could not be opened.

Having taken these precautions to safeguard his treasure, Mr. Nash saw the diamond deposited in its receptacle, then he locked the box himself, and, as an act of additional security, as he thought, he forwarded the keys by registered package to a banking house in Paris, so that the box could not be opened by ordinary means until it reached its destination.

As the railway to Benares had not in those days been completed, Mr. Nash and his companion had to travel down the country a considerable distance by dawk, and were necessitated to spend some nights on the road. The luggage, except what was wanted for immediate use, was all packed together in a luggage gharry, and not touched so far as was known until Calcutta was reached. There the travellers stayed at one of the leading hotels for nearly three weeks, and during that

time the iron box was deposited in Mr. Nash's bedroom. At last they took their departure by a P. and O. steamer, which, in due course, reached Marseilles, where Nash and Guthrie landed, taking only a small portion of their luggage with them, including the precious box, the other luggage being sent for. From Marseilles they proceeded to Paris by train, and on arrival at their destination, Mr. Nash found a letter from a very intimate friend who was an expert in precious stones. This gentleman strongly advised Nash to bring his rough diamond to London, and have it cut and polished there, as it could be done quite as well in London as in Paris, and at a less cost. Mr. Nash yielded to this persuasive argument, and resolved to proceed to London without unnecessary delay, and he escaped any examination of the box at the Custom House by making a declaration of the contents.

On reaching the British metropolis the box was also passed without being opened by the Customs; but he found by a strange oversight he had come from Paris without the keys, which he at once wrote off for, and, pending their arrival, he placed the box in the strong room at the office of a merchant friend in the City, with whom he was well acquainted. And as he had business and private reasons for getting back to Glasgow immediately, he and Guthrie started for the North. Guthrie spent a day or two in Glasgow with his relative, and then started for his home.

Mr. Nash was detained much longer than he anticipated, and three weeks passed before he was able to return to London; and the morning after his arrival he and a number of friends, including the expert who had advised him to come to London, assembled in the merchant's office to open the strong

box and inspect the wonderful diamond. The keys, which had never passed out of Nash's possession from the time they reached him from Paris, were produced, and the box was opened. The casket caused him some trouble, as he had forgotten the secret of the spring, and only discovered it after considerable delay. Then amidst much eagerness and suppressed excitement, he lifted the lid, expecting to reveal the costly gem enveloped in cotton-wool, as it was when he had last seen it, but there was no gem there to reveal, although there were some morsels of the wool remaining.

The box fell from Nash's hand to the table, and he staggered back as if he had been shot, exclaiming—"My God, the diamond has been stolen!"

At first the onlookers were incredulous, for they had been told of the extraordinary precautions taken to ensure the safety of the gem during its long journey from the Holy City on the banks of the Ganges. But the evidence of their own eyes testified to the fact that the precious stone they had heard so much about was not there.

Such an effect had the discovery of his loss on Mr. Nash at first that he seemed dazed and incapable of understanding the questions that were rapidly addressed to him. Nor was it much to be wondered at, for, apart from the enormous monetary loss it meant to him, his hopes and ambition were alike crushed. It certainly must have been a bitter blow. But after the first shock he recovered his equanimity, and expressed his determination to take every possible means to try and recover the diamond. His friend, the merchant, happened to know me very well, as I had been the means of tracking down a fraudulent clerk of his who had robbed him of a large sum of money, so he suggested that I should be

sent for and asked to investigate all the circumstances attending the mysterious disappearance of the costly bauble. The consequence of this suggestion was that I was brought on the scene, and in the course of an interview or two, I got from Mr. Nash all the particulars which have enabled me to tell the story in narrative form up to this point. He was somewhat reticent at first about the motives that had prompted him to spend so much money on a diamond. But inferentially I gathered the motive, and, though Mr. Nash is dead, I have not the slightest feeling that I have done him a wrong in putting it before the public in the light I have done. I certainly was struck by his story, and thought it was as remarkable as anything I had ever read in fiction. But Mr. Nash himself was a remarkable man. He was of a thoughtful, calculating nature, and practical to a painful degree. He wanted facts and figures for everything, and anything that had in it the least semblance of romance he affected to scorn; and in giving me the particulars of his journey, and all the incidents of his travel, he did so with a circumstantiality and a preciseness that could not have been excelled if he had been describing with mathematical accuracy the various parts of some intricate piece of machinery to a man with a mind as precise, receptive, and comprehensive as his own.

When all things are considered, it was hardly an outrageous thing for me to ask Mr. Nash if he was perfectly sure that the big diamond had been put safely into the box. But he seemed to think that it was outrageous, and he displayed an amount of irritability that was hardly justified. In the most positive manner he stated that he had seen the diamond in the casket, and had seen the casket placed in the iron box,

and the box locked. There was no ambiguity in his statement, and coming from such a man it was worthy of all credence. And yet, when I considered the precautions that had been taken, I could hardly help coming to the conclusion in my own mind that there was a mistake somewhere. So I said to him—

“Well, sir, if you saw the stone safely deposited in its receptacle, and the box locked, the robbery must have taken place during transit.”

“But how in Heaven’s name could that be?” he cried. “I do not believe any mortal being could have opened the box unless he had been furnished with the keys. And after the box was locked I sent the keys immediately to Paris.”

“Since you are so positive,” I answered, “that the robbery could not have been effected while the box was in transit, will you not admit the possibility—a remote one if you like—that there is some mistake about your having seen the diamond put into the casket?”

“But, man alive, I put it in with my own hands!” he exclaimed.

“Granted. But after having put it in, did you lock the box immediately and never let the keys out of your possession?”

Mr. Nash considered the matter for some time before giving me his answer. And when the answer came it was—

“To the best of my belief I did lock the box immediately, and never allowed the keys to leave me.”

I pointed out to him now that his answer admitted the possibility of his being mistaken, and it left the way open for the theory that the robbery had been committed immediately after he had placed the gem in

the casket. If that was not so, and in view of the fact that the box had not been tampered with in any way, then the whole case was enveloped in a mystery that it was almost hopeless to attempt to solve.

He saw the force of my argument—an argument that received support from a critical examination of the locks. They were perfect, and showed not the faintest trace of having been meddled with. They were Indian manufacture, of exquisite workmanship, and each lock was totally different in construction to its fellows. Mr. Nash, as an inventor himself, admitted that they were the perfection of ingenuity. In order to put them to a more crucial test than that of mere examination, I had them examined by a famous locksmith, who declared that to pick them would be an utter impossibility without seriously damaging them. This being the case, one of two things was certain—either the diamond had been removed after Mr. Nash had deposited it in the casket and before he locked the box, or the box had been opened while it was in transit. If the latter was the case, it was necessary to assume that facsimile keys had been used. For nothing but keys in every way identical with the originals would have opened the box. Now, the possibility of any one else having similar keys seemed to Mr. Nash so absurd that he pooh-poohed the idea.

“Then I confess, sir,” I said, “that you set me a puzzle to do what on first blush seems unsolvable. But I am clearly of opinion that there is some little tiny link missing, and if we could get hold of that we should have the key to the whole mystery.”

Mr. Nash was not so obtuse as not to see the difficulties that beset us. It was no ordinary robbery, depending on ordinary circumstances for its successful accomplish-

ment. It was probably without a parallel, and pointed firstly to unique cleverness on the part of the thief, and secondly to the robbery having been effected before ever the box left Benares. I tried if there was a theory to be constructed out of the fact that the keys had been left behind in Paris when Mr. Nash proceeded to London, but I could get nothing whatever out of it. He assured me that the box travelled in his company from Paris to London, and on arriving at the latter place he spent the night in an hotel, and the box was placed in one corner of his room. The following morning he took a cab and drove with the box to his friend the merchant, and it was at once placed in the strong room. Now, it seemed to be an absolute certainty that the robbery was not committed at the merchant's office. Consequently, the diamond was not then in the box. Had it been taken out when the box was at the hotel? Nash was equally certain that it had not. Therefore it was not in the box at that stage. And as Mr. Nash declared that the box could not have been opened either in Paris or during its journey from there to London, I was forced to the logical conclusion that the diamond had been abstracted between India and Paris, assuming that it ever left India.

Of course the story of the robbery leaked out and found its way into the papers, and though he had for the time lost his gem, Mr. Nash seemed in a fair way to gain some of the notoriety for which he craved. All sorts of theories were started to account for its disappearance, but they were utterly absurd, and no less absurd was the exaggerated value that was given to the lost stone. One paper went so far as to assert that it was worth a million of money. Perhaps I need scarcely say that it was worth nothing of the kind. I believe that the sum paid for it by Mr. Nash was £40,000,

and it was calculated that when it was cut and polished it would be worth double that amount. But even taking the lower figure as representing its maximum value, the loss was enormous. Its value, however, would undoubtedly be enhanced by the cutting and polishing, so that £40,000 really did not represent the full loss. Wealthy as he was, Mr. Nash could not view with equanimity such a gap being made in his fortune, and it was very obvious that it preyed upon his mind. Nor could I offer him much consolation when he asked me point-blank what I considered the chances were of the gem being recovered. I pointed out that if, as I suspected, the robbery was effected in India, the probability of the diamond ever being traced was exceedingly remote. In spite of my opinion, he declared that he was prepared to spend anything in reason in an attempt to recover it, and he gave me *carte blanche* to act in any way the circumstances of the case might dictate. I said that I thought it might be necessary to go to India, and he told me if that was so he would accompany me.

My first step was to seek an interview with Mr. Wilfrid Guthrie, and get from him an independent version of the story. I found that in the main it agreed with Mr. Nash's, but there was one detail in which it differed very materially. That was with respect to Nash having seen the diamond packed in the casket, that in its turn put into the iron box, and the box locked, Mr. Guthrie positively asserted that though the diamond was put into the casket, the casket was left standing on a table for a day or two. That finally, when it was put into the box, the box was not locked for some hours afterwards owing to a slight defect in one of the locks, which had to be remedied by the maker. Here, then, was a discrepancy in the two

stories that went far towards strengthening the probabilities of my theory that the gem had been abstracted in India, and that only empty boxes had been brought home. If that theory was not correct, then it followed, as surely as night follows day, that the robbery had taken place during transit. Now, there was one thing that struck me very forcibly, and it was that Mr. Guthrie laboured with obvious effort to create and confirm the impression that the theft *must* have taken place in Benares. I asked him if he did not think it came within the range of possibility that the robbery *might* have been carried out *en route*. He laughed somewhat contemptuously, and exclaimed that he was absolutely convinced it was not.

“Why do you think so?” I asked.

“Because duplicate keys would have been necessary, and where could they possibly have come from?”

This set me pondering, and a new idea came into my head, to which I shall refer later on.

When I returned to Mr. Nash and told him what his relative had stated with regard to the locking of the box in Benares, he was angry and indignant, though he admitted that there was some trouble about the lock, and that the maker had to be called in to rectify it. But he reasserted, with increased positiveness if that were possible, that he saw the diamond safely deposited in the box, the box locked immediately, and from that moment the keys never left his possession until he handed them in at the post office himself and got a registered receipt for them.

“Then you are of opinion, Mr. Nash,” I said, “that the diamond was stolen while on its journey?”

“I am forced to that conclusion,” he answered.

“And yet there are not the slightest indications that

the box has been tampered with—that is, the locks have not been forced or injured ? ”

“ No.”

“ How, then, could it have been opened ? ”

“ Nay, it is impossible for me to say.”

“ Have you no theory ? ”

“ None.”

“ You don’t believe in magic, of course ? ” I asked, with a laugh.

“ Certainly not,” was the quick answer. “ I believe in nothing that cannot be explained by rational and known laws.”

“ Good ! But you will admit that it is not irrational to suggest that duplicate keys may have been used for opening the box ? ”

My question caused him to start and change colour. Eminently practical, and even stolid as he was, he was not proof against emotion, and he gave very evident signs now that my question had affected him in a very marked manner ; and when he answered me by asking another question, there was a suspicion of nervous huskiness in his throat—that huskiness which is the outcome of suppressed excitement.

“ Why do you advance *that* theory ? ” he said.

“ Because it is the only rational one I can think of if you are accurate in your statement that you saw the stone safely locked up in Benares, and that you sent the keys off there and then.”

“ I am perfectly accurate about that. The whole transaction is as clear and vivid in my mind as if it had only occurred yesterday.”

“ Very well, then, as the black art must be left out of the question, we are forced to the conclusion that during some stage of the journey from Benares to

London the triply-guarded box was opened, the stone taken out, and the box shut up again; and that whoever took the stone out was furnished with facsimile keys."

"But where, in the name of common sense, could the thief get such keys from?"

"Ah! that is the problem to be solved. If I can solve that, I will tell you who the thief is."

Mr. Nash relapsed into silence, and remained very thoughtful for a time. My suggestion had given him food for deep reflection, and he saw—for he could not help seeing—that he must either stultify himself as regards his statement about the locking up of the diamond at Benares, or admit that my theory was the only tenable one. Presently he said slowly and pointedly—

"This would seem to imply a conspiracy."

"Yes; undoubtedly. And there must have been more than one person mixed up in it."

"Do—you—suspect—any one?" he asked, with emphasis, and measuring every word as he spoke.

"Before I can answer that question," I said, "I shall require to know more about the people with whom you were associated in buying the diamond and getting the boxes made. One thing I am convinced of now, and that is, that in order to sift the matter to the bottom, and unravel what is now a knotted skein, it is necessary that I or some one else should go to India. If you have confidence in me, then I will go."

"I have every confidence in you," he said, "and I wish you to act in whatever way you think best. And since you think it necessary to go to India, lose no time in starting, and I will accompany you."

"I must in that event make one condition," I answered. "It is that you will remain in Calcutta, unless I should require your presence in Benares."

My object in insisting on this was that I was afraid that, being known in Benares, his presence there might embarrass my movements and prevent my obtaining information. This might not have actually been the case, but I wished to be on the safe side.

He expressed his willingness to comply with any conditions I liked to lay down; and, this matter being settled, I set to work to prepare for the journey. In ten days we were ready to start, but before leaving I had an interview with an old and valued colleague of mine and gave him certain instructions, the nature of which I will presently explain.

It was a November afternoon when Mr. Nash and I sailed from Southampton in the P. and O. steamer *Ripon* for Alexandria. We had the chance of going round the Cape of Good Hope in a brand-new steamer that was to sail a day or two later for Bombay. But I looked upon the case as urgent, and under the circumstances preferred the overland route as being so much quicker. As we left the Needles behind us, and went out to the dark ocean in the gloom of a sullen night, I felt deeply impressed, for the case was an extraordinary one—the most remarkable I had ever had to do with—and I wondered whether I should succeed or fail. Through a rift in a heavy banked-up mass of cloud right ahead one star glimmered. It was the only star, strangely enough, to be seen in all the dark canopy, and I took this as an augury that I should succeed. I am not the only man who has tried to read his fate in what at a critical moment of doubt seemed—I say seemed—a sign. I chose to think that that solitary star in the storm-darkened sky was a sign, and fancifully I interpreted it in my own favour. The reader will, I am sure, pardon me for indulging in this

little bit of sentiment. I will pass over the details of the voyage, which have no bearing on the case. We arrived punctually to our time at Calcutta; and to me not the least interesting part of the journey was the long run up the winding River Hooghly, with its marvellous panorama of Oriental life and scenery that is unfolded on either side as the vessel picks her way among the dangerous shoals and sandbanks.

At Calcutta, in accordance with the stipulation, I parted company with Mr. Nash. He was to remain in the "City of Palaces" until I returned, unless I found that his presence was necessary in Benares, in which case I was to telegraph for him.

My journey to the Holy City was marked by an exciting little incident that is worth a passing reference as showing one of the dangers that beset the travellers in the pre-railway days, for at that time railways in India had only been laid to a very limited extent. In Calcutta there was no railway station at all, the terminus of the existing line being at Howrah, on the other side of the Hooghly. During one of my stages I was being borne in a palanquin on the shoulders of coolies, when, in passing through a dense jungle, a cry was raised that a tiger was approaching. The cowardly porters instantly dropped the palanquin and fled, leaving me to my fate. Being unarmed with the exception of a revolver, which would not have availed me much against a man-eater, my first thought was to seek safety in flight too, my second to lie where I was in the palanquin and let the tiger do its worst. So I shut the door and waited for developments. Presently through the chinks of the door I saw a huge and magnificent tiger approaching. For awhile it growled round and round the palanquin, and its breath came in great snorts.

I endured a *mauvaise quatre d'heure* until the blood-thirsty beast, having satisfied its curiosity, took itself off. In the course of time my bearers returned, and the journey was resumed without further adventure.

On reaching Benares I deemed it advisable not to let the object of my visit be known, as it might frustrate my plans. My first inquiries were directed to learning something about Abdhulla Ahmed. I found that he had been a dealer in precious stones and kindred things for upwards of forty years, and was said to be one of the best experts in India. But what was of greater consequence to me then was that by common consent he had an unblemished reputation. I had deemed it probable that Ahmed might have had something to do with the robbery, for I was convinced that it had not been carried out single-handed; the high character he bore, however, almost entirely disarmed my suspicions, though not quite. But before I had known him a week I should have been ready to wager heavily that he knew absolutely nothing about the crime.

He was a stately Brahmin, white-haired and mild-eyed, with a genial, open, frank manner that at once impressed one. He had all the dignity and courtesy of his race, and was fascinating, pleasant, and affable.

Having convinced myself that he had had no hand in the robbery, I took him into my confidence, feeling sure that he would prove a valuable ally. He heard of the robbery with profound and unassumed astonishment, and when we had discussed the subject from every point of view he expressed a firm opinion that the gem had not been stolen in Benares; for had such been the case, he felt sure he would have heard something by that time that would have aroused his suspicions. I asked

him to give me a reason for his opinion, and this was it. No man there—although in a certain sense gems were common—could attempt to dispose of a diamond of such value as the Nash without its being known. Big stones, even in India, were eagerly sought after; and if a rumour once got out that any one was in possession of a valuable gem, buyers from all parts would seek him out. In fact, it would be impossible to keep the matter secret.

Although this opinion did not quite satisfy me, I had to admit that it carried considerable weight. I then pointed out to him that if the robbery had not been committed in Benares, then it was necessary to assume that duplicate keys had been used—unless the stone had been abstracted in Benares and carried away to some other country. But having regard to Mr. Nash's positive assurances that he had seen the stone safely locked up, I fell back on the duplicate key theory, and that left me no alternative but to assume that Wilfrid Guthrie had been concerned in the robbery.

I have mentioned that during my interview with Guthrie he was conspicuously anxious to impress me with the impossibility of the robbery having been committed while the box was in transit, owing to the want of keys, and he scouted the idea of duplicates as being altogether too absurd to be entertained. He laboured so hard to convince me of this that my suspicions were aroused, but I kept them to myself owing to the absence of even a scrap of tangible proof that would have justified them. Now, however, the suspicions grew and strengthened, and I asked Ahmed if he thought the maker of the keys might have been bribed into making a second set.

My question seemed to strike a key-note, and he exclaimed that the riddle was solved. The manufacturer

of the locks and the keys was a working locksmith—a Hindoo—by the name of Lalool Goosh. Ahmed remembered now that soon after the departure of the Sahibs Nash and Guthrie it was rumoured that Goosh had become rich, and to the astonishment of those who knew him, he cleared off a heavy debt that he owed to a money-lender who was pressing him. Where did he get this money from? Not as the legitimate price of his labour for making the locks and one set of keys, for that at the outside could not have amounted to more than 200 or 300 rupees. Was not the assumption then justified that he had received a heavy bribe for duplicate keys? From whom could that bribe come, if not from Guthrie? Mr. Nash himself had closely superintended the manufacture of the locks, and had suggested one or two arrangements that added to their security. He had not ordered a second set of keys, and therefore a second set could only have been made secretly and for a bribe. Another element of suspicion was that Lalool Goosh had left Benares, and no one seemed to know where he had gone to.

I felt now that I was gathering up the links one by one, and that the solution of the mystery was apparently easy. It was, of course, of the highest importance that Goosh should be arrested, and Ahmed undertook to find out for me where he had hidden himself. Some difficulty was experienced at first, as it was obvious he had taken steps to prevent his whereabouts being known. But ultimately we heard that he was living in Madras, and thither I took my way, though not before I had gathered up in Benares certain sworn evidence to the effect that Lalool Goosh was known to have become suddenly rich; that none could tell where his riches came from; and, lastly, that he had gone away, and had

shown a very obvious desire to keep his whereabouts a secret. These things warranted suspicion, and on suspicion of his having been an accessory to the robbery I might effect his arrest, though I had some doubts whether he could be really punished, even if it was proved that he had made the keys, because he could plead—and it would be difficult to disallow the plea—that he did not know for what purpose they were required. Of course it would have been a mere legal quibble, but legal quibbles are what lawyers live by. My main object, however, was to get indubitable proof of Guthrie's guilt, and I hoped to do that through Goosh.

On arrival in Madras I laid my evidence before a magistrate, who, on the strength of it, issued a warrant which was executed by the native police, and Goosh, much to his amazement, was lodged in jail. Thither I visited him, and found him exceedingly dejected, and for a time it seemed as if he had resolved to keep absolutely silent, for not a word could be got out of him. But ultimately this reticence gave way before the prospects of a long imprisonment, and he voluntarily confessed that he had made a set of duplicate keys for Guthrie, who paid him 5,000 rupees. He vowed that he did not know that the keys were required for an illegal purpose; but when questioned as to his motive for secretly leaving Benares and concealing his address, he said that after the Sahibs had departed it began to dawn upon him that Guthrie would never have paid so much money for the keys unless he had some sinister design, and, getting frightened, he went away.

Such was his statement, but the all-important point was his confession of his having made the keys to

Guthrie's order. In compliance with legal formality, he was duly examined before an English and a native judge, and he repeated his confession, which was duly sworn to and attested. That being done, he was set at liberty on bail; and armed with this confession, I returned to Calcutta, where Mr. Nash had been waiting very impatiently, and in great suspense, for though I had written to him, I had not given him a single hint of the discovery I had made. Almost his first greeting was—

“Well, what have you done?”

I had some hesitation at first about telling him the facts, since they reflected so seriously on the honour and honesty of his own kinsman. But I argued with myself that sooner or later he must know, and nothing was to be gained by a temporary withholding of the information, so I answered him, and said—

“I have proved that my theory about the duplicate keys is correct.”

“Yes.”

“And that has enabled me to fix on the thief.”

“Who is it?” he asked, with painful eagerness.

“Your relative, Mr. Wilfrid Guthrie,” I answered.

“I suspected as much,” Mr. Nash replied quietly; but it was obvious that the revelation was a terrible shock to him.

It was not until three or four weeks later, when on our way home, that he could bring himself to ask me for full particulars of what I had learnt. He then said that he had no desire to punish his unworthy kinsman if he would restore the stolen diamond. I pointed out, however, that we should certainly defeat the ends of justice, and possibly fail to discover what had become of the stolen property, if Guthrie was not arrested. And

he made a request that I would not refer to the subject again until we reached England. During the interim, he had evidently turned the matter over and over in his mind, for as soon as we arrived in London he said—

“Mr. Donovan, I shall leave this matter entirely in your hands. You will do what you consider right.”

I had no difficulty in deciding what the “right” was, and I applied for a warrant for Guthrie’s arrest, which was duly executed, and he was lodged in jail.

Before going abroad I had given a colleague instructions to closely watch Guthrie during my absence, and he now reported to me that the suspected man had made several journeys to Paris and Belgium. The object of these journeys was to be learned subsequently.

In the meantime, Guthrie felt his position keenly. He seemed to be utterly broken and wrecked, and to a lawyer who had been engaged to get up his defence he made a full confession, with instructions that it was to be handed immediately to Mr. Nash. The confession was that he had procured the duplicate keys and taken the diamond out of the box during the voyage from Calcutta to Marseilles. He had since tried to form a syndicate to buy it, and for that purpose he had visited Paris and Belgium, but his efforts had not been successful, and he stated that the big gem would be found in the cellar of his house. This was proved to be the case, and Mr. Nash recovered his diamond. Having no vindictive feeling, he was anxious that the case should not be pressed against his relative, and he succeeded in getting him liberated on heavy bail; he himself being bond for a large amount. But Guthrie’s position was gone, his honour ruined, and he took advantage of his freedom to put an end to his blighted life by blowing his brains out.

It was a terribly sad ending to a strange little drama that had in it all the elements of a romance. It was a striking illustration of human weakness and human vanity, with the moral of suffering and sin. Mr. Nash was greatly cut up by his cousin's death; and regarding the diamond with anything but favour, since it had brought ill-luck to his family, he decided to part with it at once, and he sold it to the late Czar of Russia, Alexander II., and the last I heard of it was that it was in the Winter Palace at Moscow. It had been cut and polished, and was kept under a glass case as one of the royal treasures.

Perhaps I ought to say that, as no evidence was forthcoming against Lalool Goosh, he escaped without punishment for the part he had played. He was the only one who gained anything by the dishonest transaction.

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Dr. Andrew WILSON, F.R.S.E.,

Lecturer on Physiology and Health under the "Combe Trust;"

Editor of "Health."